



Vegetable Production from Home Gardens

Vegetables – the answer to hidden hunger in low income communities



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1. Preamble

From the baseline study for the ATONU project, formative research and literature review from the project sites, it was apparent that there was dietary inadequacy, with animal source foods, vegetables and fruits being consumed in small quantities. Even though vegetables form a major part of the human diet, and are a primary source of micronutrients, they are often under-produced for home consumption. As part of its planned interventions, the ATONU project promoted the production and consumption of vegetables to improve dietary diversity.

2. Summary of Engagement

Targeted community members were encouraged to start and maintain home-based vegetable gardens for own consumption. As a way of encouraging farmers to grow and consume vegetables, ATONU provided starter packs of locally available vegetable seed that are rich in several micronutrients. The vegetables were distributed based on the suitability of the local area's agro-ecological conditions as well as farmer preference. Participating community members were trained in vegetable production, processing, as well as utilization.

3. Objectives of the Engagement

To improve availability of vegetables by encouraging participants to establish home-based vegetable gardens.

To capacitate participants with skills to engage in vegetable production, processing and consumption.

iii. To improve dietary diversity by promoting the consumption of vegetables.

4. Target Group and Selection Criteria

The target group consisted of households that were participating in the ACGG project, and had children below 5 years of age, and women of reproductive age. With participation being optional, up to 70% and 40% of the targeted households in Ethiopia and Tanzania respectively, took up vegetable gardening during project implementation.

5. Preparation for Engagement

Train the Trainer Sessions

ATONU field assistants were trained in vegetable production, processing and preparation for consumption.



• Production

The course content included the importance of backyard gardens as a source of fresh vegetables that can be harvested and consumed within a short space of time, an important factor for managing nutrient loss. The course also focused on strategies for moisture retention, given the water scarcity due to dry spells in different regions of both Ethiopia and Tanzania. ATONU promoted water saving technologies such as sack gardens as well as elevated gardens to conserve moisture.

• Processing

Field assistants were trained on appropriate post-harvest handling and processing methods. Poor post-harvest vegetable handling can expose vegetables to nutrient loss or contamination. Delayed consumption or long exposure periods between the farm and the table cause the harvested vegetables to lose valuable nutrients by the time they are finally consumed.

Required materials

- Seed packs and seedlings
- Fertilizers and chemicals
- Training aids (pictures, samples of materials, e.g. sacks, disused tyres, etc)
- Cooking utensils
- Energy saving stoves
- Vegetables

6. Implementation

i) Establishment of Home Gardens

• Community Group Training Sessions

Practical training sessions were conducted to build the capacity of participating households on production and post-harvest handling. Demonstrations were conducted for production, with field assistants explaining the processes and the rationale behind each. Participants were encouraged to establish their own home gardens in line with practical sessions.

• Homestead Visits

Participants benefitted from home visits by the field assistants. The home visits enabled farmers to ask all pertinent questions and get practical help with their own home project. Field assistants also took advantage of the home visits to assess the progress made, with a view to identifying potential champions.



ii) Post-Harvest Handling and Preparation

Participants were taught about the need to conserve nutrients through proper harvesting, handling and preparation (cutting and cooking) methods. ATONU personnel conducted training on vegetable preservation in order to meet nutrient needs during those times when vegetables are hard to access.

iii) Review of Performance

- Performance review was conducted at all homesteads that opted to establish gardens.
- The reviews galvanized the men, encouraging them to want to demonstrate their commitment and higher understanding of the ATONU project and its aims. As a result, men supported their wives, with their households demonstrating tangible outputs.

iv) Selection of Champions

- Based on the results of the performance reviews, a participatory process of selecting champions followed.
- The participants with outstanding home gardens were selected to form part of the group of champions that would go forth and demonstrate the ATONU-promoted life style.

v) Training of Champions

- After being peer selected, champions were exposed to a day of further training, conducted by ATONU field assistants, with the support of ATONU National Coordinators.
- The one-day training helped champions to ground their understanding of ATONU, considering that they would be at the forefront of promoting the ATON project and its objectives as role models.



“I learnt a lot from the time you gave us the t-shirts with the message ‘eating for health and not for hunger’. That message stuck with me. I now eat for health and not for hunger. The images on the t-shirts and the calendars you gave us always remind us to eat diversified plates. I am, therefore, thankful to ATONU for supporting us to have home gardens because they help us to access vegetables more readily. We really appreciate that.”

Thomas Muidete



“The new thing for me from the ATONU project was learning about vegetable processing through drying to use during the dry season. We learnt how to dry vegetables correctly in the shade and not in the sun because vegetables lose nutrients when dried in the sun. We also learnt that vegetables should not be cooked too long. We used to cook vegetables for 30 minutes but now we have learnt that 5 minutes is enough. We love the new taste, although the older ones like my mother still prefer the vegetables that have been cooked for a long time.”

Sarah Ndongole



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