

FIELD TESTING THE DRAFT WOMEN'S AGROFORESTRY MANUALS

The aim of field testing the women's agroforestry manual was to ascertain: i) the level of understanding of the pictures by women farmers; ii) women's views on the value of the material in the manual; iii) any additional material, alterations, or deletions which would help the women to understand the subjects or provide them with information on other subjects of interest. It was therefore important that women were encouraged to criticise the manual and present their views and ideas for the design and content without influence from non-users such as field staff or other members of the village.

The manual, in its present form, should provide useful information to illiterate women farmers in The Gambia. However, this is a draft copy and it is expected that there will be subjects of no interest to women and illustrations which cannot be readily understood by rural women. The manual was specifically designed to include a large number of illustrations and topics so that field testing would provide more information on the range of interests and the problems and potentials of using pictures. It is likely that, as a result of the field tests, the final print of the manual will be as a series of smaller booklets, perhaps concentrating on single topics of interest.

The production of the manual has already involved considerable input from women farmers in The Gambia. However, this has been centered on the identification of subject matter and the production of the individual pictures or sequences of pictures. The field trial is a more comprehensive study in order to gain a better understanding of the potential value of this method of using illustrations as a training tool.

The field trial was coordinated by Mr. Kaba Sama, AMDM, Anglican Mission Development Ministries. He has worked for approximately 20 years as a field officer with various development organisations in The Gambia focusing on forestry and agroforestry. He has considerable expertise in both theory and practice of a range of subjects relating to tree establishment, particularly on farmland, and his character and training are such that he is particularly good at listening and communicating with farmers. He has assisted me with the development of material for phase I of the project and I am obliged to the AMDM for allowing Kaba a 6 month secondment to enable him to conduct this fieldwork.

Rose Clarkson
Project Manager

**AGROFORESTRY MANUAL FOR ILLITERATE WOMEN FARMERS IN THE GAMBIA
FINAL REPORT OF THE SIX MONTHS FIELD TEST
(ODA PROJECT No. R6072)**

Introduction

The field testing of the Agroforestry Manual for Illiterate Women Farmers in the Gambia was held between May and October 1997. The period of six months in four Divisions in The Gambia, namely Western Division (WD), North Bank Division (NBD), Central River Division (CRD) and Upper River Division (URD) and it was conducted in four rural villages, each village representing a Division. The villages where the testing was conducted include: Pirang in WD, Tankanto in NBD, Dobang Kunda in CRD and Jawo Kunda in URD. The interaction of people and the link of these villages to the rest of the communities in the Division, together with their willingness to participate in the field testing, makes them fit to represent the Division for the project. The report of each village is attached to this paper, dealing with each part of the manual separately.

Apart from the test done with the women in the villages some individuals working for organisations whose priority projects are the fight against deforestation have been contacted to look at the manual and give their opinion about it. The organisations and people that have been contacted are: Mr. Rupert, Associate Peace Corps Director (APCD) responsible for natural resource management; Mr. Lamin Saho, Deputy Programme Manager, Action Aid The Gambia, CRD; Mr. Sarjo Fatajor, Divisional Forestry Officer, NBD; Mr. Landing Sonko, Divisional Forestry Officer, URD and Miss Mariama Trawally, Divisional Food and Nutrition Subject Specialist, Department of Agriculture, URD. They were generally impressed with the subjects selected and the presentation of the subjects through illustration.

Mr. Kaba Sama
Women's Manual Field Testing Coordinator
Anglican Mission Development Ministries
The Gambia, West Africa
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VILLAGE: DOBANG KUNDA

Since the manual was introduced to women's groups in Dobang Kunda in May 1997, there was high expression of interest by the women in their willingness to participate in the test. During this period several meetings were held, as it was done in other villages, to explain the reasons for the test and how it should be done and who/how many to involve. In response to the meeting, the women assured their readiness to help in testing the manual. Even though the period was when they were busy in the rice fields. The women said "We will find time to look at the manual, because we know it will give us experience and encouragement in doing our garden work."

Each woman who received the manual was advised to look at the manual part by part and give their opinions on:

- Each picture, clear or not clear.
- The message, each of the pictures carry.
- The arrangement of the pictures explaining each activity.
- Are there other ways of showing the action or sequence of the pictures?
- What new knowledge and experience was learnt from the manual by looking at the pictures?

Any time the contact person visited the women he used the points above to create discussion for clarification. See below the findings of each part.

Part 1 - Using the Manual

May 1997

The women said the pictures in this section are clear and the actions presenting the activities are well illustrated. The hand points make it easy to understand the sequence of the activities.

Part 2 - Tree Planting and Care

June 1997

This part of the manual all the women have interpreted the actions of the pictures very well. They said, reading this part of the manual will help them do their tree planting activities better.

Part 3 - Three Useful Trees

July 1997

- Cashew (*Anacardium occidentale*)
- Neverdie (*Moringa oleifera*)

- Papaya (*Carica papaya*)

The actions of the pictures in this section are clear. Most of the women have no problem to interpret them. The sequence of activities was satisfactory, except one woman who could not understand the action of a hand covering the sown cashew seed in the polypot. The rest are clear.

Part 4 - Live Fencing

August 1997

In this section the women find no problems with picture identification. All the steps are understood. The only picture they have a problem to understand is the picture of a thorn tree (Bano) which they interpret as dead tree. When they are asked why they see this as dead tree, the response was it has no long thorns on it.

Part 5 - Pest Control Using Neem

September 1997

We have very well followed the method of making the Neem solution. The actions explaining the process at each stage were well presented and understood by the women. The interpretation they give to each picture was correct.

Part 6 - Food Preservation Techniques

October 1997

- Mango jam
- Tomato pest
- Cashew pancake

In this section of the Manual the women find it very interesting and easy to understand the process. the subject and the presentation of the topic were well arranged. The drying process of the cashew pancake is not well explained, the three days follow without night in between, please, put night in between the days to make it more understanding.

VILLAGE: TANKANTO

During the six months period of testing the manual in Tankanto, the women were asked to look at the manual and give their opinions on:

- Each picture, clear or not clear.
- What message each of the pictures carry.

- The arrangement of the pictures explaining each activity.
- Are there other ways of showing the action or sequence of the pictures?
- What new knowledge and experience was learnt from the manual by looking at the pictures?

The contact person, each time of his visit to the women during the six months period he used the above five points to create discussion on each part of the manual. Below it shows the opinions of the women on each part of the manual looked at.

Part 1 - Using the manual

- A hand pointing to the first picture on the page
- Layout of an "instruction page", etc.

On this part the women have no problem with interpreting the pictures. This part of the manual explained how to use the manual and the importance of sharing the manual with others, said the women. The actions are well understood by the women.

Part 2 - Tree Planting and Care

June 1997

The women said in this part the pictures are well illustrated. The sequence of the pictures explaining the activities were satisfied. There was no objection with the way the activities were presented. Our problem here is the inability to identify the type of tree seedlings being transplanted. Said five of the women. Through this manual we know now how proper tree planting and caring is done.

Part 3 - Three Useful Trees

July 1997

- Cashew (*Anacardium occidentale*)
- Neverdie (*Moringa oleifera*)
- Papaya (*Carica papaya*)

There was nothing that the women comment on the side of pictures and the arrangement of pictures explaining the activities. The pictures were large and clear, said the women.

Part 4 - Live Fencing

August 1997

In this section of the manual the women of Tankanto identified all the pictures except the thorn tree (Bano) which has not shown enough thorn to identify as a living thorn tree. At it's present form the women think it is a dead tree. The two hands holding the stick, cut from the live-fence showing the

height of the stick was interpreted as a woman holding a stick trying to break it into two. Please use one hand to bring the message out.

Part 5 - Pest Control Using Neem

September 1997

This is one of the subjects that the Tankanto women were interested in. One woman explained, “we lost most of our crops because we cannot keep down the pest population, the chemicals that we use to control them are too expensive to buy, sometimes not even available at the market. This new technique that we have learned from this manual will help us prevent our crops from pest without cost. For the past two years we stop working in our garden because of pest and fence problems so now that we know how to control pest with neem tree leaves and seeds and live fencing technique, we will go back to the garden again”.

Part 6 - Food Preservation Techniques

October 1997

- Mango jam
- Tomato pest
- Cashew pancake

This section interested the women very much, because they said it taught them a technique that will help them to preserve their products that cannot be sold in the market fresh. The pictures in this section have demonstrated the activities very well. One observation by the women shows that the three days follow each other without night. The second day should have been the first night of the drying instead of a day. Please check on that.

VILLAGE: PIRANG

Generally, the manual was described by the Pirang women who used it for the past six months as very educational and full of ideas that are useful to them in their crop production. They, therefore consider this manual as a tool which can help them to improve their work activities. They said, this manual can help any Gambian woman farmer to do their work better. Use of neem tree to control pest against our food crops and the use of mango to mango jam and cashew to cashew pancake are of great interest to us. “The subjects and the activities which were explained in this manual through picture illustrations are well presented and of great interest to us”, said the women. Throughout this manual all the pictures and their messages were well interpreted by the women, except two women who found one part of the manual difficult to interpret - the message of the action. The

findings recorded for each part of the manual is shown below. The rules of the test instructed the eight women with their friends they share the manual with to look at the book and give their opinion on the following points:

- Each picture, clear or not clear.
- What message each of the pictures carry.
- The arrangement of the pictures explaining each activity.
- Are there other ways of showing the action or sequence of the pictures?
- What new knowledge and experience was learnt from the manual by looking at the pictures?

These points were also remembered by the contact person during his/her visits to the women, so as to create more discussion during their reading of the manual to her, which the clarification on the topics.

Part 1 - Using the Manual

May 1997

This part is emphasising the importance of sharing the manual with others and how to use the manual. The pictures are clear and large enough to see the message from the actions.

Part 2 - Tree Planting and Care

June 1997

The action of the pictures and the sequence of activities were well presented. There is no alteration or objection to any picture.

Part 3 - Three Useful Trees

July 1997

- Cashew (*Anacardium occidentale*)
- Neverdie (*Moringa oleifera*)
- Papaya (*Carica papaya*)

In this section of the manual six out of eight women were able to interpret all the pictures and the actions of the pictures very correct. Two of them were not able to identify some of the pictures and their actions, among these two women one cannot identify the Neverdie pruning. The other one did not know the polypot, so she interpreted it as a can or a tin, the same woman cannot recognize the hand holding a cashew seed about to put it in the hole. These women said although they cannot interpret these pictures mentioned above it does not mean that the illustration of the pictures are not clear, no, it is because of our understanding of these objects. So, no need to change them.

Part 4 - Live Fencing

August 1997

This part of the manual the women were able to interpret the action and the pictures of all the illustrations except the picture of the thorn tree (Bano) which they interpret as dead tree and the stick held by two hands was said to be hand trying to break the stick in two. The bano has not shown enough thorns with it that is why we cannot identify it as thorn tree.

Part 5 - Pest Control Using Neem

September 1997

The illustrations on this section were clear, and the action of any picture in this section was understood said the women. The sequence of pictures explaining the making of the neem solution was perfect. We like it very much and we are also happy that we know this cheap way of protecting our crops, said the women.

Part 6 - Food Preservation Techniques

October 1997

- Mango jam
- Tomato pest
- Cashew pancake

In this section one woman cannot identify the mango fruits. At the picture where four mangos were hanging to the tree. She interpreted them as calabash. Where a woman's hand is using a knife to peel the mango, the same woman cannot interpret that too, to her it is orange peeling. The rest of the women testify their understanding of the section by reading the picture to me one by one.

VILLAGE: JAWO KUNDA

Jawo Kunda is another village among the four villages that manual field testing was done. It is a Fula (tribe) village in URD that has very little knowledge in vegetable production of tree planting. At this village when the manual testing was introduced to them they were very happy about it, because it is just recent when the Gambian German Community Forest project has started talking to them about the importance of trees and tree planting but not much time was spent with them to do it in practical. They said, with the help of this manual they can now plant any tree without problem by looking at the pictures step by step.

The six months period used to test the women's manual at Jawo Kunda, several meetings were held to explain the importance of the manual and how to use it during the testing. The women involved in the testing were asked to follow these five points and give their opinion on each picture looked at in this manual.

- Each picture, clear or not clear.
- What message, each of the pictures carry.
- The arrangement of the pictures explaining each activity.
- Are there other ways of showing the action or sequence of the pictures?
- What new knowledge and experience was learnt from the manual by looking at the pictures?

These points were also remembered by the contact persons during his visits to the women, so as to create more discussion during their reading of the manual to him. See below the findings of each part of the manual.

Part 1 - Using the Manual

May 1997

This part of the manual the women followed the illustrations correctly and they have not problem in identifying the pictures.

Part 2 - Tree Planting and Care

June 1997

In this section of the manual five out of eight women were able to interpret the actions of the pictures correctly and said the pictures are large and clear to identify. The other three women were unable to interpret the following pictures: Manuring the plant, (one woman said, to her it seems the action is showing watering). Mulching, (one woman said, to her it seems the action is showing watering). Mulching the tree is not understood by the third woman and she cannot say what it looks like to her. She was told about it afterwards.

Part 3 - Three Useful Trees

July 1997

- Cashew (*Anacardium occidentale*)
- Neverdie (*Moringa oleifera*)
- Papaya (*Carica papaya*)

All the pictures in this section of the manual were large and clear. The actions are well demonstrated for the explanation of each activity, except three pictures which two of the ladies

cannot identify what they are. These pictures are: the place where the woman was sowing neverdie seeds, to her it looked like rice sowing. The seeds should drop in the hole one by one or by two to help understand. Where the neverdie pruning is taking place the trees look to the lady like Baobab trees. The seed pods should still be hanging on the tree to help the identification. The woman bending under a tree collecting soil, the women think she is watering the tree. Please, make the picture a little bit bigger.

Part 4 - Live Fencing

August 1997

The pictures at this section and the objects were clearly seen by the women. They interpreted all the pictures, actions and appearance. Only one picture which was not clear in its appearance - the picture of a "Bano" tree in the live fence. It does not show enough thorns to know that is a thorn tree. Please, have on it more thorns to look like Bano rather than a dead tree as the women put it.

Part 5 - Pest Control Using Neem

September 1997

There is no objection on the pictures in this section. All the actions demonstrated the activities very well. Only one woman who said the neem seed looked to her like local tomato fruit. Make the neem seed a little smaller than local tomato fruit.

Part 6 - Food Preservation Techniques

October 1997

- Mango jam
- Tomato pest
- Cashew pancake

In this section all the women were able to interpret the demonstration and the action of the pictures except two women who said the sugar looked like salt to them. Cup of mango like water, sugar like water, where the boy is eating cashew cake look to them like the boy eating mango. We want the salt and sugar to be better presented than this said the women.

Mr Kaba Sama
Manual Field Testing Coordinator - Gambia
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