

GROWING HOPE FROM A NEW CROP

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April 2018





“We could have all the credit in the world,
but if we don’t have the skills to use the money wisely,
it would all be wasted.”

Rice is produced in other parts of Angola, but not in the area around Bailundo, though conditions there are favourable and there is much local demand. Building on the provision of technical expertise from other organisations, CDAIS is adding capacity development of another sort, of the ‘soft skills’ required to collaborate, learn, engage and adapt. “Now we will grow rice forever,” said Marcos Satuala. “This innovation has given us a great thing – a new crop for us. And with CDAIS we can learn more, and grow more, for our families and to sell.”

“Our group produced 2.5 tonnes of rice last year, when before we produced no rice at all.”

Zacarias Cassinda group member

Others added that it is not financial support they need, but technical help, and that they are grateful that CDAIS is helping them to source this, and teaching them how to make the necessary connections. But they know full well that they have to ask – the local saying, “if a baby doesn’t cry, it doesn’t get its mother’s milk.”

The rice school

With 183 members from four village areas, the Associação Alimuat was formed in 2010 by farmers who saw the advantages that working together could bring to everyone. Then in 2015 they took an initiative. As with so many farmers in the area they mainly grow maize and beans, but they also eat rice at home, but had never it. Having no idea how to grow it, they made contact with the local agricultural extension agency, the Estação de Desenvolvimento Agrário (EDA) local unit of Instituto de Desenvolvimento Agrário (IDA), which in turn made contact with the national Instituto de Investigação Aronómica (IIA), and an idea was born.

The final piece of the puzzle was to link up with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which agreed to offer material and technical assistance for a two-year period. And one of the innovations was the creation of ‘rice schools’.



Association members happy with their work during a visit by the CDAIS team to their rice school (left).

In 2016, this rice partnership was selected to be one of the CDAIS innovation partnerships. Farmers were receiving seeds, other inputs and technical training, but still lacked adequate functional capacities to make the most of the support. CDAIS could help to fill that gap. The work goes on, with farmers now preparing for their second harvest, and they are learning all the time.

IIA and IDA have established several sites for the innovative rice schools, where association members come and work each Monday, to learn basic skills, and where they are also testing new varieties and cultivation techniques. But some farmers are also trying different methods on their own land, for example by looking at the impacts on time and cost of transplanting seedlings rather than direct sowing. One farmer, Julino Paulo, explained, “I use fewer seed when transplanting but it takes more time. Now I wait to see which will produce more.”



Making change happen

Following selection of this partnership by the Angolan CDAIS technical working group, a capacity needs assessment workshop was held over three days in early October 2016. The partnership includes the Alimuat farmer association, the national agricultural research institute (IIA) and the provincial agricultural extension unit, among others. Vuvu Nzambi from the national research institute explains that in other provinces rice growing is the domain of large-scale farmers, and what is additionally innovative here is the passing of rice growing skills on to smallholders. Since this initial workshop, group members have had five training courses, and the head

of the association, Marcos Satuala, speaks highly about what they have learnt and passed on to others. And the work goes on. But, as many of the farmers accept and respect, change can only happen slowly.

“He who goes quickly catches only one rabbit, but he who goes slowly and carefully will catch two.”

Partnership member



Making steps in the right direction

Elias Tiago, member of the association, explained how he has learnt technical aspects such as what products he needs, but CDAIS has helped him to think about how he can best source these, and to find experts who can teach him how he can use them most effectively and efficiently.

But outstanding needs remain

“We welcome you here where so few come,” said Solino Kalalika, the soba, traditional village head. “But we need more tools, seeds and transport” – a view expressed by many. However, privately, Maria Fátima do Nascimento, CDAIS Country Programme Manager for Angola, explained this

< *“All this rice is mine!” said Julino Paulo proudly as he shows off his crop. “Last year I produced my first 40 kilograms, this year I expect much more. And since the start CDAIS has helped me grow day by day, as my rice grows.”*

reasoning: “we see issues of dependency here so clearly, and that still needs to be overcome.

After the civil war, the government helped a lot in rebuilding a renewed agricultural base, by providing seeds, fertilizers, tools – everything – all for free. So most people still expect the same, and find it hard to accept that this can no longer be the case. But as CDAIS is showing, if they work together and learn to link with others, they can lose this dependency and stand proud in the knowledge that have built something themselves.”


In one of the meetings, farmers said again that they still need a rice dehusker. So the question was asked, again, “how will you get one?... You think, you decide.” And then they thought... and one could hear the whispers – “we can’t just ask for one” – and they discussed among themselves, and one replied, “if we become a formalised group, we can ask for a loan and buy one that everyone can use.” And that process is CDAIS in practice.

“But we still need to convince the government that to support us in our efforts is good for the national economy, as it will reduce rice imports.”

Zacarias Cassinda group member

And this is a point that will surely be taken up to the national level for the policy dialogue that CDAIS is in the process of organising.

Although the association has a charter and has elected members into positions of chair, secretary, treasurer and others, they are still not formalised. CDAIS will now help them go through the legal process of registering their association, which will empower them when they choose to approach banks for loans, or others for additional support.

A photograph showing three people, likely farmers, working in a vast, green field. They are bent over, possibly planting or tending to crops. The field is filled with tall, green grass or young plants. In the background, there's a line of trees and a clear blue sky with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

“We like the help from CDAIS, and it encourages us so much to have visits to our fields. I hope it can continue.”

Manuel Kapungo Member of the Alimuat farmer association, Bailundo



Alice Chitula (foreground) with other group members, weeding in one of the fields of their 'rice school'.



“We have learnt the benefits of working in a group, but now need to learn how to calculate our costs.”

Manuel Kapongo Treasurer of the group

^ The rice growers of the Alimaut farmer association, Bailundo. Not all are currently part of the rice-growing initiative, but following the good early results, many more are interested in taking up the innovation.

< Maria Fátima do Nascimento, CDAIS Country Programme Manager for Angola, explaining the need to find solutions together to a group of rice farmers of the Alimaut association.

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The rice partnership is one of three innovation niche partnerships in Angola being developed as part of the CDAIS project. For more information, visit www.cdais.net/home/pilots-countries/angola. CDAIS is implemented in Angola by Agrinatura (represented by the Instituto Superior de Agronomia, ISA, Portugal), FAO Angola and the national Instituto de Investigação Agronómica, IIA.

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