

# How SRI has changed the life of a farmer in Timbuktu- A story





## **Moussa's occupation –**

- **agricultural farming;**
- **off-farm labor to supplement household's income**
- **Large family or eight**
- **Resided in Bagdadji village -- the northern part of Mali, Timbuktu Region,**
- **Village population of about 703 inhabitants**
- **The region has desert vegetation and experiences drought 8 months a year**
- **lifeline remained on the Niger River, from Guinea, through Mali, Niger and Nigeria**

# Crisis: *Scarcity and Insecurity*



- **Before the Africare project, my total land size was a small plot of only about 0.25ha**
- **Grew tomato, onions, and beans which was transported on the back of donkeys to Timbuktu market earning us about USD \$400/yr.**
- ***Food was very scarce:* usually only one meal a day**
- **Our diet was watermelon and *fonio***
- **No resources for medical and health**
- **Depend on traditional medicine and prayers**
- **Limited or no formal education for children**
- ***Daily concern was simply survival***

# Irrigated rice farming before SRI

- From 2004-2008, *Africare* assisted us in irrigating a perimeter of 30ha for 124 households
- Moussa's family portion was 0.5 for the project
- Average yield before between 3 to 3.5mt/ha.
- *Labor Intensive*
- Rice farming required fertilizers that was not affordable
- Required a lot of water, which is scarce in the desert
- Seedlings required to stay 45 days in the nursery and another 75 days before harvesting
- Pests - locust/birds were a major problem affecting yields



# Resilience: *Africare introduces SRI*

- In 2007, Africare experimented with SRI techniques with Timbuktu Volunteers
- Moussa = first SRI volunteer
- Set aside 12sq meters to experiment

## *The results were rewarding*

- Less labor intensive; need for less organic fertilizer and much less water
- Yield increased to 9mt/ha.
- Triggered expanded SRI farming to 0.25ha and yielded 11mt/ha
- Rice has been reserved for household consumption
- Now have reserves for hh consumption, AND surplus to assist other villagers who are not yet part of the SRI team
- Able to organize cooperative society for transportation to the Timbuktu market



# Resilience: *Livelihood Security*

## Food Security

- Now totally food secure with 3 complete meals a day
- Diversified, balanced diet (rice, macaroni, beans, meat, fish, and couscous)
- Even soft drinks are affordable

## Health

- Now food secure, family/children are rarely sick. Able to travel to hospital on illness

## Education

- Village able to construct its own school



### ***New Status following SRI – improved quality of life***

- **Acquired a different village status as Deputy Mayor and President of the Federation of Goundam Agriculture Cooperatives**

### ***Savings***

- **Opened a savings account at a local bank with sufficient cash to spend year-round**

### ***Family***

- **Family now spends more time together and able to guide children to a better future**
- **More time to do other activities of interest including giving back to the community**

### ***Community spillover effects***

- **Villagers have seen their lives transformed rapidly with SRI over a mere 2 year timeframe**
- **Even those who have not participated in SRI eat two meals per day, take their children to hospitals, and enroll them in school**

### ***Credit***

- **Access to credit is easy because Africare has linked our cooperatives to financial institutions.**



# Next Steps for Africare



- **Empower other farmers within and outside the region to take advantage of SRI to combat food insecurity.**
- **Create a support system for subsistence farmers facing such natural constraints to ease the adoption of new technology.**
- **Enhanced “Demonstration Effects” necessary to enable all farmers can see the benefits of this initiative**

# Next steps cont'd...

- **Diversification to other crops: SRI technology can be applied to other crops like wheat, sorghum and maize, and expanded to other regions and countries**
- **Empower women in particular to be more engaged in SRI especially in the constraints plot ownership, mobilizing and transporting organic manure to their plots, acquisition of farm implements and among others.**
- **More women could participate in SRI if some of these constraints can be addressed.**
- **Reduce Post harvest losses and introduce storage and processing systems as storage and processing systems are still traditional**
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- **Assist with linking to markets**

# Lessons learned

- **SRI results have surprised practically technician and farmers**
- **Guidelines for SRI contradict traditional agronomic schools of thought and often, clashed with traditional norms.**
- **For instance, farmers believe that (a) using more water to inundate their rice fields will yield higher production levels, and (b) greater application of synthetic fertilizer will increase yields.**
  - **SRI/SWI methodologies called for a change in mindset, willingness to experiment, and openness for change. Risk-averse decision-making inhibits such social change.**
- **The project has found that micro-enterprise activities can play an important role in maintaining sustainable food security.**
- **Alternative income generation provided a source of additional cash during the lean months that families could use to supplement their diets to maintain nutritional levels, especially important for children and mothers.**

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**Africare**

Timbuktu *Farmers have Lead  
the Way from Crisis to  
Resilience*”

Thank you!

