



SUCCESS STORY - 14

Experience Sharing Tours are Useful for Technological Idea Shopping

USAID/AMAREW supports in-country and overseas educational tours as a strategy for technology idea shopping that technically empowers research and extension personnel



Photo: AMAREW Project

Azola, a delicate little weed is a great nitrogen fixer that also stops mosquitos from inhabiting flooded areas. It fixes up to 90 kg N/ha which is an opportunity for emerging rice producing resource poor farm households as they lack readily available cash to buy artificial fertilizer. This is the main reason for the agronomy research team in Adet Research Center to engage in on-farm performance testing as seen on the picture using a specimen brought from India during an AMAREW supported educational tour in 2003.

U.S. Agency for International Development
www.usaid.gov

Amhara Micro-enterprise development, Agricultural Research, Extension, and Watershed Management (AMAREW) Project
www.oired.vt.edu/amarew/

Since the start of the AMAREW Project, researchers from ARARI and extension workers from BoARD, local partner institutions of AMAREW Project, have been offered both in county and overseas experience sharing tours financed by the project. This has been done with multiple aims including assessing adaptable technologies and new ideas from elsewhere, seeking mechanisms of successful technology transfer systems, and linking with relevant technology sources for future shopping of technologies and ideas.

Two years ago, a team of 11 researchers in different fields and four professionals from BoARD went to India for a couple of weeks where they visited various research and development institutes in Dehradun, Hyderabad, Bhopal, and Mumbai. The team brought back sketches and specimen for several useful technologies that could be modified and multiplied locally. The crop research team brought specimen of Azola, a bio-fertilizer technology potentially useful in the emerging rice production systems, seeds of horse gram, a high potential crop for drought prone areas, and seeds of various spices and herbs that are high value commodities for the market-led regional economic development. Currently, all these technologies are being tested at advanced stages.

The agricultural mechanization research team also brought back technical drawings and ideas on several farm machinery including single animal drawn plow and harrow, manual row planter and cultivator, hand-held single-ear maize sheller, pedal driven grain thresher, and seed cleaner. The technical drawings have already been converted into technological realities by the Bahir Dar Rural Technology Center, the mechanization research wing of ARARI, which has developed a prototype for each of the tools and machineries mentioned above.

Mr. Assmamaw Endebhlatu, a researcher at the Farm Mechanization Center, who was part of the team, said “If all these technologies were to be purchased from abroad in significant quantities, it would cost the country an exorbitant amount of money, whereas we are able to develop prototypes just by bringing back ideas for a small amount of money spent”. Dr. Enyew Adgo, the Natural Resource Research Director of ARARI who was the visiting group leader, has also commented “*the small amount of money spent on sending the team overseas for technology shopping and educational tours was money well spent, because the team returned with minds full of what is to be done next, and that is being seen now*”. This, he said, ‘*is an innovative support to the regional research system by AMAREW*’.