

Case Study 02: Eco-friendly farming –SRI

Name – RM Heenmenike	Age – 50 years
Village – Ranvan Thalagama	Group – Dimuthu
Date of joining the CBO – 2008	

R.M. Heenmenike lives in the Ranvan Thalagama village situated in the Thambutthegama Divisional Secretary Division. She is married with three daughters. When Heenmenike and her family moved to the village in 1979, they were given a paddy field of 2½ acres, which they initially cultivated using chemical fertilisers. However, the amount of land that they could cultivate depended heavily upon the water resources that they had access to; while the entirety of the paddy field could be cultivated during the maha season, only 1 ¼ acres could be cultivated in the yala season due to a lack of adequate water. This in turn affected their income from the cultivation which was their only means of income. While Heenmenike and her family managed to build a small house using their limited income, they were invariably in debt during each paddy season. Once they had settled the loan, they were back in the same financial situation with little savings.

In 2008, RGNK, one of Oxfam Australia's community-based organisation (CBO) partners, began work in Heenmenike's village. Heenmenike joined one of the small village groups set up by RGNK and got the opportunity to participate in many different programs and trainings. Among these were trainings and awareness-raising programs on using organic fertilisers and SRI farming.

Heenmenike had used chemical fertilisers on her paddy land for many years; this was very costly and diseases would spread very quickly across the paddy. After learning about SRI, Heenmenike decided to try out this system of cultivating paddy on a selected plot of land. In 2009, she therefore used the SRI methods to plant paddy on an acre of land and also used organic fertiliser. This plot of land was selected as a model by RGNK, and Heenmenike received a loan. She began to believe that SRI was a successful method to use, particularly since it required minimum amounts of water. Further, she was able to earn a good income from the acre of land on which the SRI method was tested out.

In the following year (2010), Heenmenike used SRI methods on 1½ acres of land with help from other members of her village group. The rest of the land (1 acre) was cultivated in the method that she had previously used and with chemical fertilizers. This field was destroyed due to heavy rain. Heenmenike, therefore, had to rely on the 1½ acres of SRI paddy land to gain an income. The straw was not thrown away but was used in the field as organic fertiliser.

Heenmenike's husband is very keen on the SRI method and is supportive of her work. Together they take what they need from the rice produced for their domestic consumption and sell the rest. It is difficult to get a good price for the rice sold, and work is being done by OAU and RGNK to improve marketing networks and connections.

Heenmenike is now planning to use the paddy grown under the SRI method as seed paddy for the next harvesting season. Seeing how Heenmenike and her family followed the SRI method, another member of the group, Renuka, has also adopted the method on an acre of her land.

Heenmanike was a panel member in an SRI seminar with public and government officers. She answered questions about SRI and shared her experiences with the audience. She also shared her experience in the SRI video and is very happy that there were two feature articles in national newspapers on her experience (see following photo). In the article she was questioned on SRI methodology and on her experience on the methodology. The headline reflected her quotation saying:“Only four kilograms of seed paddy for one acre.” With the skills and experience that Heenmanike has developed, she now works as a voluntary trainer on SRI farming, working to extend these types of benefits to more families in her community.



Above: Heenmanike in her SRI Field



Above: Heenmanike in a national newspaper

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