

Sesame Business Network Newsletter



Issue 6 April 2015

SBN Support Programme expands its reach to 38 clusters



The SBN Support Programme has recently included an additional 19 clusters, thereby bringing the total number to 38. These clusters are located in eight woredas and cover 73 kebeles in Northwest Ethiopia.

Detailed analysis of sesame production and marketing in North Gondar and Western Tigray has led to the proposition to extend the programme to a total number of 38 clusters. The points of analysis were: relative importance of

production areas; existence of market centres; coverage of sesame cooperatives; size of clusters and distances between actors; and interests and commitment of relevant woredas offices.

Two clusters in Tegede woreda (Amhara) have been added, as this woreda was unfortunately overlooked in 2013. Six existing clusters in Tigray have been split, because they were geographically too large or too heterogeneous (small and large farmers). (See the clusters list on page 2)

Improved sesame package shows better performance

What is the secret behind harvesting better sesame yields? The answer may well vary, but judging by the success of the technologies roll-out activities of 2014, many farmers in Northwest Ethiopia will be saying the “20 Steps”.

Between June and October, the SBN Support Programme, together with partners and stakeholders of the sesame sector, conducted activities in rolling-out the improved sesame production package (or 20 Steps), including demos at 916 sites on 823 model farmers’ fields and at 93 farmer training centres.

Despite the challenging weather conditions, specifically high rainfall at a very late stage in the crop’s maturation cycle, demonstration plots on model farmers’ fields and at farmer training

centres where the full package has been applied, gave the highest yields. At all farmer training centres in North Gondar zone, the full package treatment performs considerably better in comparison with farmers’ conventional practices. The highest mean yield of 5.23 quintal per hectare was obtained from the full package treatment, whilst farmers’ conventional practices yielded on average 1.18 quintal per hectare. This means that the full package may perform up to four times better than farmers’ conventional practice. The 20 Steps treatment also showed increased tolerance of sesame to waterlogging, sped-up crop establishment and enhanced both vigour and branching. It has helped greatly in convincing farmers of the importance of input use in sesame production. (See success stories of model farmer on page 5)

About this newsletter

The purpose of the SBN newsletter is to provide relevant and timely information about the overall activities of the SBN and its Support Programme.

In this issue we would like to highlight the major activities that have been taken place between January and March 2015

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The 38 SBCs and the woredas in which they fall (green colour denotes those SBCs organised in 2013, whereas light blue; new clusters)

West Tigray zone (Tigray)		North Gondar Zone (Amhara)	
Woreda	SBCs	Woreda	SBCs
Tsegede	Dansha Zuria	Quara	Gelego
	Division		Dubaba
	Werie		Selferei
Wolkaiet	May-gaba	Metema	Bambuwuha
	Selam		Gendewuha Brshign
	Adj-jamus		Metema Yohannes
	May-timket		Shinfa
	Korarit		Tumet
Kafta Humera	Adebay	Mirab Armachiho	Meka-Kumer
	Adi-goshu		Kokit
	Adi-hirdi		Abderafi
	Kafta Humera	Abrehajira	
	Maernet	Girawuha/Korhumer	
	May-kadra	Tach Armachiho	Ashere
	Rawiyen		Sanja
	Tirkan		Jansuma
	May-weyni	Tegede	Seroka
	Bereket		Ergoye/Marzeneb
	Baker		
Shigilil			
TIGRAY	20	AMHARA	18

For the 19 new SBCs, basic data have been collected in the last months of 2014. The write-up of the profiles is in process and close to completion. For all SBC's a summary document will be prepared

Building Blocks of SBN

- 2 zones
- 38 clusters
- 8 woredas
- 73 kebeles
- Over 72 Farmers Primary Cooperatives
- 5 Farmers Cooperative Unions
- Over 70,000 farmers
- 2 Agricultural Research Centers
- 8 Offices of Agriculture
- 8 Woreda Cooperative Promotion Offices
- Banks
- Microfinance Institutions

SBN to hold annual business meeting, in Mekelle Ethiopia

The SBN Support Programme together with C4C/SNV, Agriterria, Tigray and Amhara Regions Bureau of Agriculture and Research Institutions will organise the annual SBN meeting in Mekelle from April 20-21, 2015.

The workshop will be held with the objectives of: sharing experiences and learning lessons from activities that took place since May 2014 (last annual meeting); introducing and exchanging over the strategic agenda and new activities planned for 2015/16; and creating a platform for stakeholders of the SBN to come together and seek out new interesting opportunities in working together.

This year's main theme of the meeting will be "Invest more to earn more!"

Sesame Business Cluster actors, partner organisations and projects and authorities from government will take part in the workshop.

Targeting women and young farmers in SBN Support Programme activities

Creating more competitive, sustainable and inclusive sesame value chains is what the SBN and its Support Programme strives to achieve. Enhancing the inclusiveness of sesame business, with a decent share of benefits created for small scale farmers (mainly women and young farmers) and also labourers, is a point of concern for the Support Programme. The Support Programme has recognised that understanding the context with regards to gender dynamics and identifying options for supporting equality through support activities is central to sustainable and inclusive sesame value chain development. Therefore, to understand these dynamics better and to prepare for practical action, a gender and youth action research will be conducted during 2015. The focus will be on practical action, with induced better understanding of the specific challenges for female and young farmers.

SBN Regional Workshop held at Gondar and Humera towns

SBN Support Programme in collaboration with Gondar and Humera Agricultural Research Centres organised Sesame Business Clusters (SBCs) second Regional Workshops on Monday December 29, 2014 at Gondar and Humera towns.

The workshops were mainly held with the objectives of: reviewing implementation and evaluating results of activities of SBC stakeholders and SBN Support Programme in 2014, with emphasis on the rolling-out of the 20 Important Steps to Double Yields and Improve the Quality of Sesame (20 Steps in short); and identifying and discussing some key challenges to the sector. The workshops also aimed at creating platforms for SBN stakeholders to discuss how further scaling activities will be conducted in 2015.

On the Amhara side; Dr. Tilaye Teklewold, deputy director of Amhara Region Agricultural Research Institute (ARARI), and Tigray side; Mr. Fesha Berhe, head of Western Tigray administrative zone, officially opened the workshops held at Gondar and Humera respectively. In their opening speeches, both speakers appreciated all stakeholders who participated in the scaling activities that took place on 916 model farmer fields and farmer training centres. They also praised the joint efforts that have been made to improve the productivity and quality of sesame by the SBN Support Programme, stakeholders and partners.

The two workshops highlighted the overall activities that have been done through



Workshop participants at Gondar, attending presentations

collaboration of Regional Agricultural Research Centres, Woreda Offices of Agriculture, the SBN Support Programme and other partners in the sesame sector.

In both workshops, SBN focal persons from eight Woreda Offices of Agriculture at Metema, Quara, Tach Armachiho, Mirab Armachiho and Tegede in North Gondar and Kafta Humera, Tsegedie and Welkaiet in Western Tigray presented their reports on the results of the 20 Steps roll-out programme. In their presentations, focal persons emphasised major challenges faced and the solutions applied to overcome these challenges during the implementation of roll-out. They also presented their woreda's plan for the 2015 production season. Following the focal persons

presentations, discussions were held on the issues presented and on the further scaling of improved sesame production technologies and rotational crops. Participants focus on the coverage of scaling activities, expected roles and contributions of different actors.

Other important focuses of the workshop discussions were issues of: marketing sesame and rotational crops such as sorghum, mung bean/green gram, soya bean and cotton; access to finance; row planting; availability of quality seed and fertiliser; integrated pest management; loss reduction; strengthening primary cooperatives; developing saving culture; and other related issues. While presenting their points, participants tried to highlight major activities to be done in 2015, who will do what, with whom and how.

The workshop at Gondar brought together 67 participants, whilst 115 participants took part in the workshop at Humera. Participants were convened from among primary cooperatives, traders, development agents, Woreda and Zone Offices of Agriculture, Cooperative Promotion Agency/Offices, Trade and Transport, ECX, Regional Agricultural Research Institutes, non-governmental organisations and private companies (Detailed report of the workshop is available in the resource page of the SBN website: sbnethiopia.org).



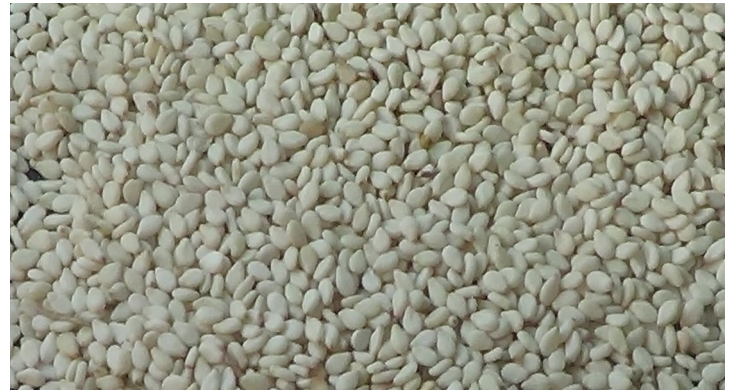
Partial view of the Humera workshop

20 Huge Health Benefits of Sesame

“Let food be thy medicine, and medicine be thy food.” Hippocrates

Sesame's history as a medicine goes back to 3600 years to Egyptian times where it was listed in the scrolls of the Ebers as a favored medicine. Also, women in ancient Babylon were believed to use a mixture of honey and sesame seeds (havla) to prolong youth and beauty, and Roman soldiers ate the mixture for strength and energy. These days, a growing body of research work shows the health benefit of sesame. The following part presents 20 Health Benefits of Sesame Seeds.

1. **Full of Great Protein.** Sesame seeds are full of high quality protein making up 20 percent of the seed with 4.7 grams of protein per ounce.
2. **Helps Prevent Diabetes.** Sesame seeds contain magnesium and other nutrients. Sesame oil has been shown to prevent diabetes, and it can also improve plasma glucose in hypersensitive diabetics.
3. **Reduces Blood Pressure.** Sesame seeds are full of magnesium— a key nutrient to help lower blood pressure.
4. **Lowers Cholesterol.** Sesame helps lower cholesterol levels, because it contains phytosterols that block cholesterol production.
5. **Good for Digestion.** The high fiber content of sesame seeds helps the intestines with elimination.
6. **Good for Healthy Skin.** The high zinc content helps produce collagen, giving skin more elasticity and helping repair damaged body tissues. Regular use of sesame oil can reduce skin cancer.
7. **Boosts Heart Health.** Sesame seed oil can help heart health by preventing atherosclerotic lesions with the antioxidant and anti-inflammatory compound known as sesamol.
8. **Prevents Cancer.** Sesame seeds contain anti-cancer compounds including phytic acid, magnesium and phytosterols. Sesame seeds have the highest phytosterol content of all seeds and nuts.
9. **Helps lessen anxiety.** Sesame seeds contain the stress-relieving minerals magnesium and calcium. Sesame also contains the calming vitamins thiamin and tryptophan that help produce serotonin, which reduces pain, assists moods and helps you sleep deeply.
10. **Alleviates anemia.** Black sesame seeds are particularly rich in iron, so they're highly recommended for those with anemia and weakness.
11. **Protects from radiation damage to DNA.** Sesamol in sesame seeds and sesame oil, has been shown to protect against DNA damage caused by radiation.
12. **Relieves arthritis.** The high copper content in sesame seeds prevents and relieves arthritis, and strengthens bones, joints and blood vessels.
13. **Protects liver from alcohol.** Sesame helps protect from alcohol's impact on liver, it helps to maintain healthy liver function.



14. **Prevents wrinkles.** Sesame seed oil prevents harmful ultraviolet rays of the sun from damaging the skin, thus preventing the appearance of wrinkles and pigmentation.
15. **Encourages bone health and prevents osteoporosis.** A handful of sesame seeds contain more **calcium** than a glass of milk. Also, the high zinc content of sesame boosts bone mineral density.
16. **Help the baby's health.** A sesame oil massage improves growth and improves sleep. Rashes on a baby's skin—especially where the diaper is— can be protected with sesame seed oil by rubbing it in. As a bonus, sesame also helps reverse dry skin.
17. **Good for eye health.** In traditional Chinese medicine there is a relationship between the liver and eyes. The liver sends blood to the eyes to support functioning. Black sesame seeds are the best for this.
18. **Good for oral health.** Oil pulling, has been used for oral health for thousands of years in Ayurveda to reduce dental plaque, whiten your teeth and boost overall health.
19. **Good for respiratory health.** The magnesium in sesame seeds helps prevent respiratory disorders by preventing airway spasm and asthma.
20. **Hair benefits.** Sesame seed oil is full of nutrients which are needed for a healthy scalp and hair.

These all indicate that sesame seeds deserve to be highly honored as an affordable food that deeply nourishes the body on many levels.

Source: Diana Herrington

<http://www.care2.com/greenliving/20-health-benefits-of-sesame-you-wont-believe.html>

Some words from farmer participants in the rolling-out activities who managed to double their yields by applying the 20 Steps

Mr. Tesfay Romedan

Mr. Tesfay Romedan was one of the farmers included in the 2014 roll-out programme. He has been working as a farmer since 2010 on four hectares of land. He lives in Hilet Koka *kebele*, Kafta Humera. In this area, farmers who applied conventional practices harvested less than 2 quintal per hectare this past year, mainly due to high rainfall and suboptimal management practices. Unlike many other farmers, Tesfaye's yield was very interesting. He achieved a staggering 11.4 quintal per hectare. The secret behind these yields, according to Mr. Tesfay, is row planting. "I use row planting, because I am well informed about its importance. This eases the air circulation so that my field was not attacked by late blight occurrence". He adds, "Row planting also makes it easier to apply fertiliser for the second time, to weed, to control pest and diseases, to allow excess water to drain from the field, and to harvest". He explained that although he was nervous to place fully his trust behind the development agents' recommendations to adopt the new technologies, he planted one hectare under more conservative practices for comparison. He did apply fertiliser to this hectare and also followed carefully many of the 20 Steps, but decided not to row plant or use quality seed of an improved variety. From this plot, he harvested 3.5 quintal of sesame; therefore, just 30% of that achieved from applying the full package.



Mr. Tesfaye Kassa from Kokit Cluster



I first do the land cleaning work. After having taken the training, I called the professional (development agent) to support me in measuring my plot. We did the measuring and I applied the 20 Steps sesame production package on half a hectare of my land. I ploughed it repeatedly. At that time my friends were mocking me. In particular they laughed at me whilst I was row planting. Some of the farmers in the village even asked how on earth I have come to row plant my sesame. I gave no attention to this. I simply did my work. I weeded the plot three times. The professionals from *Woreda* Office of Agriculture were also following my progress. After some time those farmers around my village and passers-by did not simply pass on their way. They stood there for at least 10-15 minutes to admire my sesame plot with utter surprise. They appreciated it, because it was quite different from the neighbouring plots. I was hoping to harvest more but due to the weather conditions in September, I did not get what I expected. And yet, I gained 5.5 quintal from the half hectare. I found this, because I used the improved sesame production

package properly. I am not happy with the existing market. Right now, I am selling my *Abasena* seed to other farmers."

Mr. Gamo Malede

Gamo Malede, is a young farmer living in Kisha (*Filwuha*) *kebele*, Tach Armachiho, and he has seven hectares of land in which he usually cultivates sesame due to its highly increasing economic value.

For long, Mr. Gamo was applying a traditional way of producing sesame that yielded not more than 4 quintal per hectare. In the 2013 production season, Mr. Gamo hosted one of the demonstration plots of improved sesame varieties. This was the first time for him to see new sesame varieties and planting of sesame in rows. At that time Mr. Gamo yielded an average of 7.38 quintal per hectare. On another plot he applied conventional methods, where he yielded just 4 quintal per hectare.

As a result, in the 2014 production season, Gamo was highly motivated to apply all the practices used on demonstration plots. He sowed one hectare of land applying all 20 Steps and obtained 7.5 quintal and he plans to cultivate all his land using the improved production package during the next production season.



Mr. Gamo Malede, with his sesame produce at his store

In the picture

In the picture entertains the profile of individuals, cooperatives, unions, and/or any other service provider organisations in the sesame business clusters in Northwest Ethiopia. For this edition we cover the profile of Mr. Muualem Milmile, a promising large-scale sesame farmer and exporter of sesame from North Gondar zone.

Muualem Milmile: a large scale farmer, exporter and would be owner of sesame processor

When Mr. Muualem started large scale farming in Mirab Armachiho, North Gondar in 1991, things were not very promising for him. In his first year he experienced a sesame price of 120 ETB per quintal. The effort he put into the work was not worth this result. His friends who started producing sesame around the same time did not continue for much longer. Despite this, Mr. Muualem chose not to give up and has been struggling to get better returns from his business.

Mr. Muualem Milmile, now 56 years old, has been producing mainly sesame, sorghum and cotton under rain fed conditions until quite recently. He is experimenting with groundwater irrigation for his sesame



Mr. Muualem Milmile

crop. He has tried this on just less than a quarter of a hectare and harvested two quintal. This shows him that it is possible to produce at least 2-4 times more with irrigation. Mr. Yitbarek Mengistu, an agronomist on Mr. Muualem's farm, said that they have learnt a lot from this years' experience. He reports that, "Compared to rain fed sesame production, the one with irrigation performs better in branching and capsule holding. We produce this amount without exerting too much effort."

Currently, Mr. Muualem is engaged in mixed farming. Apart from sesame and other crops, he has been producing fruits and vegetables using irrigation also. He has started honey production and rearing cattle. He said; "In my production area, we used to import onion and tomato from Sudan, but now we are doing this by ourselves. Starting something different is not easy here. When I first started using ground water to produce fruits

people were laughing at me. The same people are now calling me to get some advice".

Mr. Muualem, who is living in Gondar now, is among the first who understands that improving yield alone may not be enough to be successful. He is not only one of the successful investor farmers to have invested in mixed farming, but he is also an exporter of sesame to foreign markets. He said, "Last year, I exported 4,800 quintal sesame to Israel. I got a good price for myself and I brought foreign currency to my country. This has been recognised by the government and I was awarded a cup from the federal government." His success did not come out of the blue; he says that the key is his patience and hard work. "I have been working tirelessly. I do not lose hope. I usually consult professionals and I use the available opportunities. It has been long since I started to produce sesame, but only recently my efforts pay off. In the last five years I got better profit from the sesame business".

Mr. Muualem has the courage to do things differently. Last production season most sesame farmers did not have a high yield, because of the heavy rain during harvesting. Mr. Muualem was no exception. He harvested a mere 1,000 quintal from his 600 hectares. But, by having observed the late duration of rainfall, he sowed sorghum



in October after his sesame was harvested and now expects to harvest about 1,500 quintal.

Next year Mr. Muualem plans to use irrigation to produce sesame on 25-30 hectares of land. He states, "I have two big waterholes and reservoirs. Watering is difficult and to make it easier I bought a water sprinkler from China". He is also in the process of buying a sesame harvester from Turkey. What is more, he is ready to invest in sesame processing as well. He is about to receive land from North Gondar zone administration to build a processing company for tahini, oil and the like.



Mr. Yitbarek Mengistu

Key facts

Land: 600 hectare

Crops: sesame, cotton and sorghum

Vegetables and fruits: banana, papaya, onion, mango, tomato, green pepper, oranges, lemon, guava, cabbage, collard greens

Trees: moringa, neem and *jatropha*

Animals: 800 sheep and goats, about 80 oxen

Beehives: 32 modern and 4 traditional

Warehouse: 1 with a holding capacity of 4,000 quintal

Employees: about 45 regular workers including a professional agronomist

Camp: with bedrooms for regular employees, toilet and shower, rooms for the guard and for maids, a special room for chemicals, milling house, generator and television

HuARC organises a sesame research review meeting

Humera Agricultural Research Centre (HuARC) organised a two-day sesame commodity research review meeting from January 20th to January 30th 2015 in Mekelle.

Thirty two participants attended the meeting. Attendees were from Humera, Gondar, Alamata, Maytsebri-Shire, Asosa, Melkawerer Agricultural Research Centres, Haramaya and Axum Universities, Tigray Agricultural Research Institute, Tigray region Bureau of Agriculture (BoA) and SBN Support Programme.

Researchers from different centres presented concluded, on-going and newly initiated sesame related research activities and discussions were held after the presentations.

During the meeting, the SBN Support Programme representatives presented their action research works activities. They also presented the improved technologies scaling activities of the Support Programme, which has been run together with Tigray and Amhara



Partial view of research review meeting

BoAs and Regional Agricultural Research Institutes in 2014.

In observation of the occasion, Mr. Fisseha Bezabih, deputy director of Tigray BoA, indicated the importance of research to improve the productivity and quality of sesame. He emphasised that agricultural growth without the support of research is impossible.

The meeting provided the chance to discuss overall strategic issues such as capacitating research centres by improving their logistics and human resources, and improving sesame production with irrigation, soil and water management.

HuARC is recognised as the national centre of excellence in sesame research.

North Gondar zone administration to organise sesame day

North Gondar administration zone organised a meeting on February 2nd 2015 for sesame stakeholders to plan to celebrate 'Sesame days' in April 2015.

During the meeting Mr. Solomon Mulugeta, head of Trade and Transport Department, presented a brief background about the opportunities and challenges in the sesame sector. He said that the objective of the sesame days is to encourage stakeholders to give more attention to sesame production, marketing and value addition so that the country can earn more foreign currency out of the sector.

The event will be organised in Gondar and stakeholders of the SBN, including producers, farmers' cooperative unions, input dealers, traders, exporters, governmental and non-governmental organisations, and others will participate in this event.

Different events will be organised during the sesame day, among others: a question and answer session focusing on sesame, which will be aired on television; a photo exhibition and fair displaying different sesame products; research results presentations concerning sesame production and marketing; and awarding different stakeholders who have been doing outstanding work in the sesame sector.

The first sesame day will be celebrated with the expression "Sesame: our white gold".

be sufficient. During the SBN Regional Workshop in December 2014, stakeholders suggested that ACSI give special attention to those operating in the sesame production area.

ACSI is one of the largest microfinance institutes in Ethiopia.

ACSI increases the amount of loan it gives for its clients

Amhara Credit and Saving Institute (ACSI) has increased the amount of loan it can give to sesame farmers as of October 2014.

The ceiling for new farmer clients has been raised from 7,500 to 15,000 ETB and from 15,000 to 30,000 ETB for existing clients. This change has been made for all those who live in towns.

For those who live in rural areas, the ceiling is raised from 7,000 and 10,000 ETB to 14,000 ETB per individual for new and existing clients respectively.

The interest rate remains as before; 15% for those clients who make monthly repayments and 18% for those whom do so all at once.

This is an important opportunity for smallholder farmers to refer to micro finance institutions for credit requests as opposed to informal money lenders, whom they commonly have no other choice but to turn to.

Although ACSI's recent measure is an important step worth appreciating, farmers and other stakeholders do not seem to believe that this change will

Woreda SBN focal persons and Woreda Offices of Agriculture awarded

SBN Support Programme, together with Gondar and Humera Agricultural Research Centres, awarded certificates of appreciation to the eight Woreda Offices of Agriculture (WOA) and their respective SBN focal persons in North West Ethiopia.

Quara, Metema, Tach Armachiho, Tegede and Mirab Armachiho Woreda Offices of Agriculture from North Gondar and Kafta Humera, Tsegedie and Welkaiet Woredas Offices of Agriculture from Western Tigray and each focal person were awarded for their active and outstanding performance in the implementation of the roll-out programme.

The certificates of appreciation were awarded during the second Regional Workshops held at Gondar and



Above Dr. Tilaye Teklewold, and below Mr. Fesha Berhe, while awarding WoA and their respective focal persons at Gondar and Humera respectively

Humera towns on December 29, 2014. In Gondar, Dr. Tilaye Teklewold, deputy director of ARARI, and in Humera, Mr. Fesha Berhe, Western Tigray zone administration head, awarded the certificates.

Having handed out the certificates to SBN focal persons and heads of Woreda Offices of Agriculture in Amhara region, Dr. Tilaye expressed his hope that focal persons and Offices of Agriculture will continue to work very hard in further scaling improved technologies and practices. He also informed participants that ARARI will take into consideration the issues and concerns raised by participants pertaining to local seed varieties, chemical use, crop rotation and soil fertility.

Upcoming activities of the SBN Support Programme

- SBN annual workshop in Mekelle 20-21 April 2015
- Preparation for the 2015 production season from January-July 2015
 - * Signing collaboration agreements with important partners for realising the 2015 SBN work plan
 - * Training of Trainers for taking the 20 Steps improved sesame technologies package to greater scale
- Action research on women and youth involvement in sesame business May- December 2015
- Training on organic farming
- Field layout preparation for sesame and rotation crops June- July 2015
- Training on financial literacy May 2015

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More information about the SBN and its Support Programme can also be found on the SBN website:

<http://www.sbnethiopia.org>

You can also find us on our facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/SBNEthiopia>

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