

Insights from the Field



Rita Cavele at center with Dra Zelia, and Mr Ciro (technician and Magude) and two members of some associations in Magude who grow OFSP

Committed to bringing OFSP to rural populations in Mozambique

Following a severe drought and then flooding in Southern and Central Mozambique in 2009–2011 the International Potato Center (CIP) (at the request of the Mozambique Government) developed a response strategy for disseminating new varieties of Orange-Fleshed Sweetpotatoes (OFSP).

The Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) provided financial support to help families recover from disaster and simultaneously improve their vitamin A intake.

Working closely with government extension personnel, a two-year effort to mitigate the impact of disasters in 5 provinces of Mozambique succeeded in getting new drought-tolerant orange-fleshed sweetpotato varieties distributed to over 134,000 households.

32 years after joining the Department of Agriculture, Rita Cavele still loves her job. Despite having to regularly travel away from her family for her work as an agricultural extension worker, Rita remains committed to working with the rural communities of Mozambique, particularly following the recent environmental disasters.

Rita is one of 156 government extension personnel who worked for the OFDA (Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance) project in Magude, Maputo. Following widespread drought and flooding in Central and Southern Mozambique, the OFDA provided financial support to the International Potato Center and the Government of Mozambique to disseminate new varieties of OFSP. The project gave all involved a unique opportunity to help families recover from the recent natural disasters and simultaneously to improve their vitamin A intake.

In her role as an extension agent on the OFDA project, Rita worked closely with local agricultural producers and farmers to monitor and evaluate project development as well as to target women in the dissemination of OFSP information and products. Rita worked closely with local women's association



For more details about the International Potato Center please visit our website at: www.cipotato.org

And for further details about CIP's sweetpotato projects in Sub Saharan Africa please visit: <http://sweetpotatoknowledge.org>

Written by Leonid Moises



who were involved in OFSP distribution including Associação Macubulane, Associação Tirani wa mamani and Associação Siabhonga.

As Rita says: "I love challenges in my life and I love to work with rural communities! So being an extension personnel gives me a great chance to teach and learn from rural communities. I love teaching communities about techniques for growing and managing OFSP. OFSP is easy to grow and communities see results within three months. My communities see how easy it is to grow OFSP and are happy with the results – high yield with less inputs involved".

Rita has become a passionate advocate for the OFSP crop and a keen promoter of the nutritional and economic impact the OFSP crop can have on rural populations. Rita was so impressed by OFSP that she trained herself to become an OFSP Decentralised Vine Multiplier (DVM). Rita now has OFSP plots in Magude, Maputo which are doing well.

Rita decided to grow OFSP because she wanted to



One of established fields in Magude under supervision of Rita Cavele

"experience the challenges of growing OFSP herself in order to explain to the farmers how to grow OFSP in the most successful way. Being an OFSP producer was a way to convince others that this crop is easy to grow-anyone can. You just need a piece of land and a little labor and you will see results within three months."

Rita says that that OFSP is well-known in Magude and that the majority of citizens are familiar with the plant as a great source of vitamin A. She said although it's rare to find people selling roots in local markets this is not a problem as people often buy OFSP directly from the farmer's field. She hopes that the OFDA OFSP project might continue as it has been very successful in the local district and more and more people are keen to get involved in OFSP production and distribution.

Rita believes that even though the project has come to an end, the impact that it had on rural communities will mean that OFSP production and distribution will continue in Magude long into the future.