

Reaching Agents of Change (RAC) Project

This project has successfully tested innovative approaches to generate investment, reach policy makers, and train advocates and implementers concerning a new technology that links agriculture and nutrition, orange-fleshed sweetpotato.

AUGUST 2014



RAC team and stakeholders at a donor round-table meeting in Abuja, Nigeria (credit Ayo)

The Reaching Agents of Change (RAC) Project advocates for increased investment in orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) to combat vitamin A deficiency (VAD) among young children and women of reproductive age. RAC also builds institutional capacity to design and implement gender-sensitive projects to ensure wide access and utilization of OFSP in selected African countries. Its efforts contribute to the broader Sweetpotato for Profit and Health Initiative (SPHI), which aims to improve the lives of 10 million African families by 2020. The RAC project (June 2011- December 2014) was implemented in three principal countries: Tanzania, Mozambique and Nigeria and in two secondary countries: Ghana and Burkina Faso. RAC was implemented by **International Potato Center (CIP)**, which has expertise in OFSP breeding, production, use and promotion; and **Helen Keller International (HKI)**, an NGO with experience in food-based nutrition and health interventions to combat VAD, and advocacy.

Through its advocacy efforts from June 2011 to August 2013, RAC has generated new investments for OFSP worth **USD 16,348,811 million**. RAC has built the capacity of **55** national advocates and **11** regional champions to engage and influence key decision makers, governments,

private sector, foundations, philanthropists and donors to invest in OFSP projects along the value chain. RAC has also built institutional capacity to design and implement gender-sensitive projects to ensure wide access and utilization of vitamin A rich OFSP in the five project countries. The number of change agents so far trained stands at 4,311 (2036 female). A total of **39** step-down courses have been conducted, reaching **3,995** tertiary facilitators and farmers. Moreover, 130,999 households have received vines in Tanzania, Mozambique Nigeria and Ghana through the efforts of RAC, its partners and other projects.



What is the problem?

Governments are inadequately aware about the extent of the vitamin A deficiency problem and the potential of vitamin A rich OFSP to contribute towards the reduction in VAD. In addition, organizations that want to invest in OFSP often lack adequate technical knowledge.



What did we want to achieve?

There were 2 major objectives:

- 1) **Generate new investments and policy change and include OFSP in national, regional and sub-regional policy agendas**

The RAC project is a unique effort to increase awareness about VAD, and strengthen both the technical and advocacy capacity for successful nutrition interventions using OFSP. Through development of strong advocacy efforts at country level and adoption of a strategy to identify and train a cadre of African advocates, RAC aimed to **generate new investments** from governments, donors, NGOs, and private sector to scale-up adoption of OFSP in the five target countries as a tool to combat VAD and improve food security. Our aim was to help mobilize at least USD18 million devoted to OFSP programmes in the five target countries





RAC's Julia Tagwireyi with Martin Mucheru of SADC at a CAADP Partnership Platform Meeting (credit M. McEwan)

by 2014. The project's Promotion Experts, Regional Advocacy Advisor and a cadre of OFSP ambassadors and advocates led efforts to **ensure that OFSP is included as an integral part of policies and strategies that address food insecurity and malnutrition at national, regional and sub-regional levels in Sub-Saharan Africa**. Efforts targeted policy makers in national, regional and sub-regional bodies including the African Union (AU), the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

2) Build institutional capacity for OFSP programming and implementation

RAC also aimed to **build the capacity of national implementing agencies to design and implement technically strong, gender-sensitive and cost-effective programs that drive uptake of OFSP**. The foundations of this effort were: i) the establishment of a 10 day Training of Trainers' course on "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Sweetpotato" in Mozambique, Nigeria and Tanzania, in collaboration with national institutions committed to conducting the course on an annual basis during and after the project period; ii) a 6-day course titled "Engendered Orange-fleshed Sweetpotato Project Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation" in the three principal countries; and iii) develop an effective seed system that would enable 600,000 direct and 1.2 million indirect households obtain OFSP, by the end of 5 years after the RAC project closed.

What have we achieved?

Major accomplishments to date include:

Advocacy

- Through advocacy and awareness raising efforts (2011 – 2014), RAC has generated **USD 16.4 million** for OFSP. A further **USD 6.4 million is in the pipeline**. Mozambique achieved the highest amount of committed investment – USD 11,047,550 (67% of the total), followed by Burkina Faso (USD 2,963,244, 18.13%), Nigeria (USD 1,262,479.42, 8% - year one of a four year project), Tanzania (USD 1,033,501, 6%) and Ghana (USD 42,036, 0.4%). The fundraising efforts focused on 5 categories of donors namely national government, local government, external governments and UN agencies, NGOs, foundations and the private sector. Table 1 shows the total investments by donor category.

Table 1: Breakdown of investments by donor category

Donor Category	% of Total
National government	9.07
Local government	0.78
External governments/ UN Agency	56.77
NGO/ Foundations	1.97
Private Sector	31.42
Grand Total	100.00



RAC's Dercio Matala discussing OFSP with Armando Emilio Guebuza, President of the Republic of Mozambique and Lucilia Hama, Governor of Maputo (credit Edgar Cossa)

- RAC successfully built, engaged and supported a cadre of national advocates and regional champions for nutritious foods, and created a regional advocacy platform. These advocates and champions are hosted in national and regional institutions (public, private, NGOs and CBOs) to ensure sustainability. In total, the capacity of **55** national advocates and **11** regional champions has been strengthened to engage and influence key decision makers, governments, private sector, philanthropists and donors to invest in OFSP projects along the value chain.

- At the regional level, OFSP was proposed by the African Union for inclusion in the CAADP strategy as part of a flagship program (September 2013). Nutrition was integrated into the draft Regional Agriculture Policy for SADC (April 2013). The SADC food and nutrition strategy draft document also incorporated food-based approaches (including biofortified crops) as a strategy for addressing micronutrient deficiencies (April 2014). Also, the Faculty of Pediatrics of the West African College of Physicians (WACP) approved advocacy for food based strategies for sustainable response to micronutrient deficiency in the sub-region (2012).
- Advocacy strategies for regional, Mozambique, Nigeria and Tanzania focusing on demand creation for OFSP, policy change and resource mobilization have been developed and are being implemented. In Ghana, an OFSP Advocacy Stakeholders' workshop has been conducted and a community of practice developed.
- RAC awarded funds to Shingirai Association in Mozambique, Potato Farmers Association of Nigeria (POFAN) and Potato Growers, Processors and Marketers Association of Nigeria (POGPMAN) under the Small Grants Scheme (SGS). The funds were used to develop viable innovative advocacy and promotion events that advocated for the inclusion of OFSP in provincial and district level policies on nutrition and food security in Mozambique.
- OFSP/biofortification has been included in about 18 key policy /or strategy papers in the three primary countries. These include CAADP/PEDSA (Strategic Plan for Development of the Agricultural Sector) investment plan, policy brief on biofortification, biofortification integration in 6 provincial Socio-Economic Plans (PES), Multi-sectoral Action Plans for Chronic Malnutrition Reduction (PAMRDC) for three provinces, and a communication strategy under PAMRDC. OFSP was also included in the 2013 national food security baseline survey assessment questionnaire in Mozambique. In Tanzania, OFSP was included in the draft National Food Security Policy, and biofortification in the draft National Nutrition Strategy Implementation Plan. In Nigeria, OFSP was included as a priority crop in the agriculture transformation agenda and mentioned as a complementary food for children in the Infant and Young Child Feeding Manual by both Federal and State Ministries of Health. It is also cited as a tool for controlling VAD in the 2013 National Guidelines on Micronutrient Deficiencies Control.
- RAC has developed a folder and 12 fact sheets on a range of topics related to OFSP as part of a toolkit for advocates (English, Portuguese, Swahili and French) and 3 regional flyers (English and French), pull-up banners, posters, brochures and a media advocacy kit on DVD. Additional flyers on 'why invest in OFSP' have been developed for the project countries. All documents produced have been uploaded on the Sweetpotato Knowledge Portal to provide wider access.

- RAC engaged mass media (television, radio, newspapers and the web) to disseminate nutrition education messages relating to the value of OFSP to combat VAD. A total of 22 media reports were recorded, several TV documentaries created, and numerous radio shows aired to promote and advocate for OFSP. Media awareness events were held in each of the 3 primary countries. This is driving demand for OFSP as a food based approach to combat VAD.
- OFSP technologies were included in 8 episodes (English and Swahili) of an interactive TV documentary (Shamba Shape-up) produced and aired on Citizen TV from March 2014 to August 2014 in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The episodes are available online <<http://www.shambashapeup.com>>. Complementary information - pamphlets on the episodes and brochures have been produced to help respond to queries from farmers.

Capacity building

- A gender study on sweetpotato was carried out in Kwara, Nasarawa, Ebonyi and Benue in Nigeria and the final report has been disseminated to guide project implementation and inform other OFSP projects.
- RAC has built capacities of three host-institutions to deliver the training of trainers' course on "Everything you ever wanted to know about sweetpotato": Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) in Tanzania, University of Eduardo Mondlane (UEM) in Mozambique, and the Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute



RAC advocacy materials on exhibit at the 10th CAADP Partnership Platform Meeting in Durban, South Africa (credit M. McEwan)

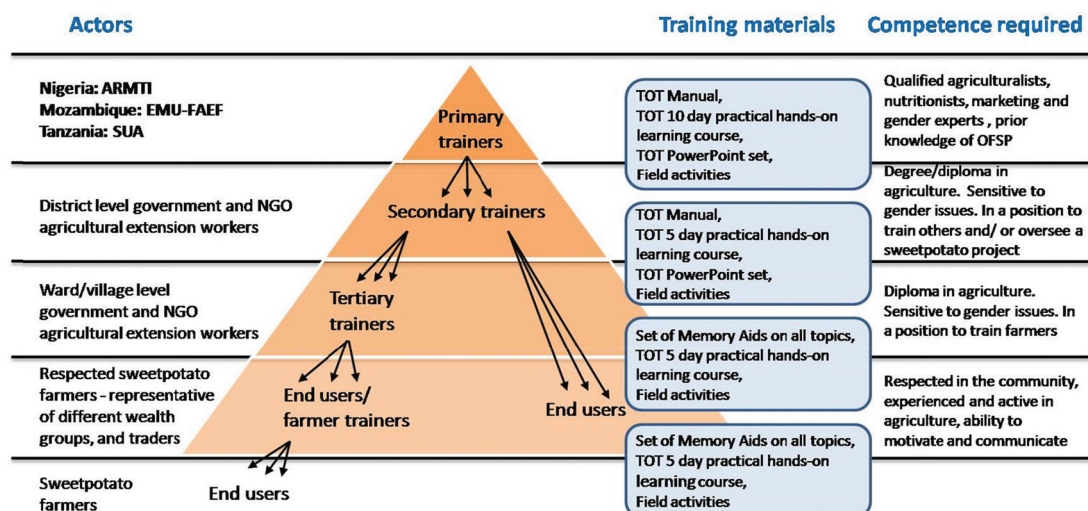


Figure 1 shows the RAC training pyramid with the different levels of trainers.

(ARMTI) in Nigeria. The training of trainers' course uses adult learning techniques. The number of national primary facilitators trained in these three institutions over the three years (2012 -2014) stands at 41. In partnership with RAC, the host institutions have conducted a total of nine courses. The number of change agents so far trained stands at 4,311 (2036 female). A total of 224 secondary facilitators have been trained as trainers. These participants have already started training others through the step-down strategy within their organizations, countries or regions. So far, 39 step-down courses have been conducted reaching 3,995 tertiary facilitators and farmers. The national partners will continue hosting this course in future but additional funding will be needed for scholarships.

- Through the 6-day course on "Engendered OFSP project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation," 51 agencies in the 5 target countries have been trained to design and implement technically strong, gender-sensitive and cost-effective projects and programs. The trained participants have already started preparing and submitting proposals on OFSP for funding.
- To ensure sustainability, RAC has developed and published hard copies of two important toolkits: i) *Everything you ever wanted to know about sweetpotato training of trainers manual*, and ii) the *Engendered OFSP project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation learning module*. The former has been translated to French, Portuguese and Swahili while the latter is available in English and Portuguese. The kits will be made available through the Sweetpotato Knowledge Portal.

- Under **seed systems**, RAC has facilitated the production of clean planting materials (OFSP vines) to decentralized vine multipliers (DVMs) for widespread distribution including spearheading the release of two OFSP varieties in Nigeria (December 2012 and June 2013). To ensure sustainability, all primary multiplication activities were conducted by the national research institutions in each of the RAC countries. In total, 7.3 ha of primary seed were established in year 2 and 10.3 ha in year 3. The use of irrigation systems, coupled with proper planning and distribution strategies in the project countries resulted in an almost 10-fold increase in the number of vines distributed from the primary sites to DVMs/farmers (414,386 vines in 2012 to 4,030,734 vines in 2014). By July 2014, RAC had registered a six-fold increase in the number of hectares under secondary seed multiplication (4.2 ha in 2012 to 23.8 ha in 2014). Approximately 130,999 households have received vines in Tanzania, Mozambique Nigeria and Ghana.
- The external mid-term evaluation concluded that: "Clearly, RAC performed successfully in advocacy to introduce OFSP into agriculture policy documents at country and regional levels in spite of the challenge of low rank of sweetpotato among staple crops in terms of aggregate production and policy preoccupation with hunger in food policy agenda at national and regional levels...evidence provided by RAC shows that all targets for human capacity building were exceeded by large margins at halftime."¹

¹RAC Mid-term Review Report (2013). Unpublished-pgs 2,3