

Nutritious Orange-Fleshed-Sweetpotato for Niassa, Mozambique

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A new 3.5 year project multi-partner project, “Nutritious Orange-Fleshed Sweetpotato (OFSP) for Niassa” began in November 2012. It seeks to improve vitamin A and energy intake in at least 20,000 households with young children, the group most vulnerable to vitamin A deficiency, by expanding OFSP production and consumption in 7 districts in Niassa province by March 2016. The best bet varieties for these districts were identified during the first year.



■ Children participating in taste test of new OFSP varieties in Mazogo, Lago district (credit B. Rakotoarisoa).

❖ What is the problem?

Niassa is the most remote and sparsely populated of Mozambique’s provinces with a population density of just 11-12 persons per km² of land (compared with the national average of 30 persons per km²). Niassa suffers from very high rates of child malnutrition. CIP, together with its provincial partners, proposed a sustainable orange-fleshed sweetpotato program, incorporating nutrition, agriculture, marketing and capacity-building components targeting at-risk groups. Malnutrition and Vitamin A Deficiency (VAD) among young children remains one of the biggest challenges in developing countries. In Niassa province, nutritional status is a major concern –45% of children under five are stunted and levels of vitamin A deficiency are high.

❖ What do we want to achieve?

The key aim of the project is to improve vitamin A and energy intake for at least 20,000 rural households with women and young children using orange-fleshed sweetpotato-based approaches,

ensure that at least 20% of households growing OFSP earn 50 USD or more per year from OFSP sales, and increase average sweetpotato yields by 50%. Capacity building and testing novel approaches to maximize impacts from OFSP-based nutritional and agricultural programming are key to achieving these objectives.

❖ How are we making it happen?

CIP and partners (across government departments and NGOs) are providing access to large quantities of OFSP planting material by creating a network of decentralized multiplication sites and trained farmer multipliers to serve surrounding communities. The implementation strategy includes:

- Testing the performance of varieties using participatory On-Farm-Trials (OFT) at community level with farmers, paying attention to the different preferences of men and women
- Identifying and training decentralized vine multipliers (DVMs) so that the selected new varieties can be easily accessed by beneficiaries
- Conducting training programs, field days, and providing technical backstopping
- Sponsoring campaigns to inform the communities about how OFSP is rich in vitamin A
- Linking to nutrition efforts led by others to increase impact on dietary practices
- Facilitating postharvest utilization and small scale marketing to improve incomes.
- Participating in SETSAN-led efforts at the provincial level to get nutritional concerns integrated into agricultural projects

❖ Where are we working?

The project is working in 4 districts of northern Mozambique (Lago, Muembe, Sanga and Lichinga).



Partners

- Instituto de Investigação Agrária de Moçambique (IIAM)
- Associação Progresso
- Secretariado Técnico de Segurança Alimentar e Nutrição (SETSAN)
- União dos Compostes e Associações de Lichinga (UCA)
- Diocese Anglican
- Concern Universal
- Food for the Hungry International (FHI360)



■ **Producers from Mozambique** and their DVM partners during our exchange visit in Malawi. (credit Jorge Luis Jeremia).

OFTs were planted in all districts, using disease free planting materials multiplied at the IIAM Station as quality starter material for the DVMs in each district.

✦ **What have we achieved so far?**

- Nine (9) varieties of OFSP were tested though 40 OFTs in four districts with participatory evaluation done for leaf, root tastes and yield assessments.
- The varieties chosen per district were as follow:
 - In Lichinga: Esther, Gloria, Bela, Jane
 - In Lago: Bela, Delvia, Gloria, Jane
 - In Mueembe: Gloria, Delvia, Erica, Bela
 - In Sanga: Jane, Erica, Delvia, Bela
- Varieties Gloria and Bela were identified as the best options (in relation to taste) for bread, juice and biscuits, followed by the Jane variety as good for bread and the Delvia variety for juice.
- 1,500 clean vines cuttings were multiplied in screen house at IIAM station in Lichinga.
- 31 producers are multiplying vines selected from the OFTs, among whom seven are women.
- 40 farmers participating to the OFT were trained in Lichinga on “*Why and how to conduct on-farm-trial*” and “*The importance of clean vine selection*” before setting up the OFT.
- An agronomist and two technicians from three project partners participated in 10 days of training on “*Everything you ever wanted to know about sweetpotato course*”. Two staff from IIAM already completed the first training course and both staff members are now part of the project.
- 13 individuals (including community representatives and nutritionists) from the four Districts and from local bakeries were trained in production of golden bread, juice and biscuit in Lichinga. The varieties Gloria and Bela were preferred for all products.

- Six DVMs from Mozambique traveled to learn about OFSP production from their equivalents in Malawi during a two day exchange visit. A DVM from Malawi using his own means made a return visit to the farmer he hosted from Mueembe to explore the availability of land for their business on OFSP vines and roots production.
- A baseline survey was conducted in 396 households in 8 districts and data are being processed. At the end of the project, we will conduct another survey that will enable us to measure the impact of the intervention.

✦ **What are the next steps?**

In the coming year:

- Results of the OFT and baseline surveys will be documented.
- Vine production and sweetpotato production training will be carried out at district levels using learning by doing techniques.
- District level meetings will be held in 3 new districts: Mandimba, Cuamba and Mecanhelas Districts and OFTs conducted in the coming season.
- OFSP vines will be disseminated for at least 4,000 direct beneficiaries starting December 2013.
- Postharvest utilization training will be conducted at district levels.
- Linkages to nutrition and bakers will be developed through demand creation campaigns and value chain facilitation.



■ **Mother and child** from Chimbunila tasting many OFSP-based foods (credit A. Viegas).

CONTACT

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