



REACHING AGENTS OF CHANGE PROJECT

ADVOCATES RETREAT REPORT

**DUNOMA PLAZA HOTEL LAFIA, NASARAWA STATE FROM 3RD – 5TH OCTOBER,
2012, NIGERIA**

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

The Retreat was held at Dunoma Plaza Hotel, Lafia Nasarawa State from **3rd – 5th October, 2012**. The retreat was declared opened by the Nasarawa State Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources – **Alh. Yahaya O. Ibrahim**.

Present also were the Country Director of Helen Keller International, Abuja, the Promotion Expert and other RAC advocates from the three (3) states and participants from Kaduna State where farm trials were on-going, Media representatives, and Senior Staff of the Host state who were there to witness and participate in the Retreat.

The retreat witnessed presentations by the Key resource persons: - Mrs. Mary Umoh on the **RAC** project, “Advocacy Strategy” and “the Roles and Responsibilities of Advocates”, “Planning, Reporting and Feedback” as well as the “Small Grants Scheme (SGS)” “**Nutrition/Vitamin A**” and the “Use/Role of Media in Advocacy” was presented by Hadizat Ibrahim – a Nutritionist/Broadcaster, while a presentation on “Sweet Potato Value Addition” was done by Mr. Idowu O. A. of the Federal Polytechnic Offa. **Dr. Jude C. Njoku** presented a paper on “Agriculture/OFSP”. The retreat also witnessed general discussions by participants mainly, on the presentations by the resource persons. An average of 24 persons participated in the retreat. (List attached).

2.0 **Retreat Objective**

The retreat had the following objectives:-

- To give participants a clear understanding of the RAC project and the roles the Advocates are expected to play.
- To allow participants to come up with the advocacy strategy, validate them and finalize for implementation.
- To build up Advocates capacities to enable them implement the OFSP project effectively.
- Stakeholders to agree on planning, reporting and feedback system in the course of project implementation.
- The retreat was to allow advocates to have a shared sense of mission and to discuss other things for effective implementation of the project.

3.0 **Workshop Expectations and Fears**

At the commencement of the workshop, participants were asked to write down their individual expectations and fears for the workshop. The following are some of the expectations and fears as presented by the participants:-

A. **Expectations**

- i. “Full understanding of the operational procedures of the project”
- ii. “Role of stakeholders will be fully understood”
- iii. To know what Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato is all about”
- iv. “Increased knowledge about OFSP”

- v. “Better be re-positioned to advocate for OFSP”.
- vi. “Increased commitment on the part of Advocates”.
- vii. “Increased knowledge about Vitamin A deficiency and the need to tackle it, using OFSP”.
- viii. “To be able to decide how best OFSP can be financed”.
- ix. “To be more confident that the cultivation and utilization of OFSP will be successful in the country starting with the pilot states”.

B. Fears

- i. “Lack of political will and support to OFSP”
- ii. “State of insecurity that might prevent one from going to the field”.
- iii. Protocols/administrative bottle necks may delay on proceedings”.
- iv. “Delay in the official release of OFSP vines by the Federal Government”.
- v. “Acceptability of value added product from OFSP”.
- vi. “Fear of sustainability of the program”.
- vii. “Logistics support may not be adequate”.
- viii. “Inadequate political/Executive Support”.

4.0 Presentations

a) RAC Project

The RAC Promotion Expert commenced her presentation by giving some highlights about Nigeria as a country, its population, location in the World Map, Land Mass Area, climate etc. She emphasized that Nigeria’s rapid population growth portends massive food insecurity as well as social and environmental problems. This situation therefore calls for a need to have a project such as RAC to counteract the food in-security problem.

The paper did not just talk about food insecurity but also food and nutrition security in Nigeria where she defined food security as a situation that exist when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active, healthy life. Hence the need for the RAC project on Orange fleshed Sweet Potato (OFSP) which provides vitamin A that can reduce vitamin A deficiency in children under the age of five.

The presenter stated that the **Reaching Agents of Change (RAC) project** is led by **CIP** and **Helen Keller International** in close collaboration with the **National Root Crop Research Institute (NRCRI)** which began in June 2011 with Nigeria as one of its Key target countries. RAC has the overall vision of seeing to increased investments and commitment to the dissemination and use of Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato (OFSP) as a means to combat vitamin A deficiency (VAD) and food insecurity in Nigeria. The paper stated some objectives of RAC to include:-

- o Increased Investment in OFSP through advocacy and capacity building.

- To put in place policy and institutional arrangements to upscale OFSP and
- To develop best practices for OFSP advocacy

b) **Nutrition/Vitamin A**

The presenter – Hadizat Ibrahim – gave highlights of the Nigerian story on the effect of vitamin A deficiency to include:

- About 140 million children suffer from malnutrition
- 350,000 children go blind due to vitamin A deficiency
- 670,000 children will go blind due to vitamin A deficiency.

The paper defined vitamin A, which is contained in OFSP, as a micronutrient needed by the body in small amount.

Food Sources of Vitamin A includes:-

- Animal source (milk, liver, kidney, fish oil and eggs)
- Plant sources (carrots, sweet potato, palm oil, Mango, Pawpaw) etc.
- Bio-fortified foods e.g., margarine, cooking oil, sugar Etc.

The paper highlighted the importance of vitamin A, effects of its deficiency and effort to combat it.

The paper was concluded by listing the RAC Factors of OFSP to include:-

- High nutritional value
- High yield
- Can survive under different growing conditions
- High adoption rate
- Income generating opportunities
- Women empowerment.

The presenter called on the following to key into the OFSP program:-

- Government at all levels
- NGOs
- Media Organizations
- Food industry
- Farmers
- Women and
- Youths

C. **Sweet Potato Value Addition**

The presenter of this paper (Mr. Idowu) listed varieties of products that could be produced from sweet potato for value addition, to include potato chips, potato germ, etc. The presenter encouraged that people should embark on the cultivation of OFSP not only for the vitamin A content but also for the production of varieties of products which OFSP offers. He particularly called on women to get involved so as to improve their economic status.

D. **The Role and Use of the Media in Advocacy**

This paper highlighted the importance of media in advocacy and called on the advocates to make proper use of the media to sensitize public on the activities of OFSP. It defines media advocacy as **strategic use of mass media to support community organization to advance a social or public policy initiative.**

The paper listed effective use of media advocacy to include:-

- Working with the media
- Making friends with the media
- Creating new stories the media wants
- Use of paid adverts
- Meeting the media
- * Changing the media's perspective on community through sustained efforts.

E. **Advocacy Strategy**

Advocacy was defined as an **organized approach to promoting an issue and motivating others to take action.** It is aimed at influencing decision makers to make changes on issues that have direct impact on peoples' lives.

Reasons for Advocacy include:-

- Improve or promote an issue or course for change in Policy
- Have access to services
- Increase participation
- Resource allocation etc.

Basic elements of Advocacy are:-

- The issue at stake
- Goal and objective
- Use of data and research for advocacy
- Identifying advocacy audience
- Developing and delivering advocacy messages
- Making persuasive presentation
- Fund raising for advocacy

- Evaluating advocacy efforts

The presenter encouraged advocates on OFSP to make proper use of materials presented to assist them in the implementation of the OFSP project.

F. **Resource Mobilization**

Resource mobilization was treated as a very important topic in OFSP implementation. The following reasons were given for resource mobilization:-

- To diversify and expand resources
- Help to formulate an independent budget
- For sustainability of the project
- To expand deep relationship with the stakeholders and Community.

Factors that motivate resource providers include:-

- Politics – to receive votes
- Social – to make name and to protect ones image
- Financial – to earn money, make profit etc
- Business
- Development
- Cultural

Participants were encouraged to note these factors for use during the OFSP implementation in their various states.

G. **Agriculture/Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato in Nigeria by Dr. J. C. Njoku**

This paper highlighted on most of the things that were already said about OFSP. It added that Nigeria is the second largest producer of OFSP in the World. It produces about 4 million metric tons of OFSP per annum.

Participants had the opportunity to see and test physically, OFSP for the first time at least for some participants.

5.0 **Way Forward**

The workshop discussed and agreed on the following resolutions for action:-

- a). It noted that the OFSP project is a 3 year project (from June 2011 – May 2014)
- b). The effort of the workshop to commit participating states to provide in their 2013 budget, activities of OFSP failed, as all states had already defended their budgets. However, they were told to do so in year 2014 budget. Meanwhile, they were encouraged to find alternative sources of raising funds to implement their activities in addition to the little funds they may receive from Helen Keller International.

- c). The already developed OFSP advocacy strategy and promotion matrix for Nigeria was reviewed and each state was asked to use it and come up with a 6 months' work plan (from October, 2012 – March, 2013) and forward same to the coordinator at Abuja latest by Tuesday 9th October, 2012.
- d). Participating advocates from the states agreed to work as a team with a team leader and secretary appointed for smooth co-ordination and implementation of the project at state levels.
- e) An agreement was reached to showcase the OFSP at the forth coming National Agric-Show from the 13th – 16th October, 2012.

6.0 **Closing:**

The workshop closed on Friday 5th October, 2012 with all participants, testifying that they have gained a lot during the workshop with promises of ensuring to transfer the knowledge gained to others.

Dated Friday 5th October, 2012 at Lafia

PARTICIPANTS ATTENDANCE LIST

S/N	NAME	ORGANIZATION
1	Hadizat Ibrahim	Federal Radio Cooperation Nigeria
2	Bulus Garba	FCT ADP, Abuja
3	Nancy Orshi	Radio Benue Makurdi
4	Abdulrosheed Okiki	Radio Kwara
5	Adu Joseph O. A.	Kwara ADP
6	Dr. Philippa N. Momah	Health Consultant Services
7	Amina A. Ahmed	Min of Health Lafia
8	Daniel Jacob	Kaduna ADP
9	Dinah Ade	BNARDA Makurdi
10	Benny Onto	NPFS Abuja
11	Yakubu S. Umar	KADP Kaduna
12	Ibrahim Y. Giza	Nasarawa ADP
13	Dorathy A. Katampe	Karu LGC
14	Idowu O. A.	Federal Polytechnic Offa
15	Stephen G. Kpama	Nasarawa ADP
16	R. A. Asongo	BNARDA
17	Naphtali J. Dachor	Nasarawa ADP
18	Julius E. Amedu	BNARDA MKD
19	Joshua Jonathan	Nasarawa ADP
20	Christiana Jo. Omadefu	Nasarawa ADP
21	Dahiru Hamza	NBS Lafia
22	Samson Jonah A.	NBS Lafia
23	Jibrin Yusuf	NRCRI
24	Dr. Jude C. Njoku	NRCRI