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SUPPORT TO MALNUTRITION REDUCITON IN WOMEN AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS THROUGH FOOD-BASED APPROACHES

October 2022

SDGs:



Country:

Ghana

Project Code:

TCP/GHA/3703

FAO Contribution:

USD 225 000

Duration:

3 June 2019 – 31 December 2021

Contact Info:

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Implementing Partners

Ghana Health Services (GHS); Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA); Women in Agricultural Development Directorate (WIAD).

Beneficiaries

Women, children and other vulnerable groups in rural areas.

Country Programming Framework (CPF) Outputs

CPF Priority Area 1: Sustainable Agriculture drives agro-industrialization and economic growth.

CPF Output 1.3.2: Government and non-state actors have greater capabilities to improve sustainable production and consumption of safe and nutritious food.



BACKGROUND

In 2019, it was estimated that 5.5 million people in Ghana were malnourished. Levels of malnutrition are particularly concerning among children, and are an underlying cause of a third of all child deaths. With a national prevalence of stunting at 19 percent (as per the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 2014), the situation is worrying, especially in the Eastern and Central regions, where anaemia is also prevalent.

Malnutrition in Ghana is mostly caused by inadequate food intake and a lack of both variety and nutrient-rich food in the diet of the population. Poor residents in rural areas are particularly vulnerable. Although Ghana possesses a diverse range of nutrient-rich crops, consumption and utilization of these items are low, due in part to supply chain challenges, socio-economic factors and a lack of knowledge and awareness on how to preserve and use nutrient-rich food.

This FAO project seeks to address the challenge of nutritious food consumption in Central, Eastern and Greater Accra regions by promoting the production and consumption of nutrient-rich food such as the orange-fleshed sweet potato (OFSP) and other locally identified crops. The OFSP was identified as a key crop for this project, as it contains a high concentration of carotene, which has the potential to improve the nutrition of women, children and other vulnerable groups. Its high iron content also makes it effective in the treatment of iron deficiency anaemia.

IMPACT

This project supported MoFA in ensuring that nutrition and food security are sustained and that rural poverty, in particular among vulnerable people, women and children, is reduced. The identification and promotion of nutritious crops contributed to improving household knowledge on nutrition and ensuring access to nutrient-rich food, thereby contributing to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, which is geared towards ending hunger by 2030.

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

Throughout the project, radio messages and workshops were used to raise public awareness on the importance of consuming nutrient-rich food. A total of 1 100 people from a range of communities were sensitized on the consumption of healthy diets and their impact on good health and nutrition, as well as the usage of indigenous nutrient-rich food.

The project also supported measures to increase the production of nutrient-rich food and ensure its consumption. In addition to identifying different local nutrient-rich crops, such as OFSP, for promotion and adoption, a total of 482 home gardens were established for trained farmer groups to multiply planting materials. Home gardening has the potential to provide the majority of food that a household needs, and is recognized as a key intervention for promoting good nutrition practices. Women's groups, including school feeding caterers, were also trained on storage, preservation and utilization of a selection of nutrient-rich food.

Activities were primarily coordinated by experts from the departments of MoFA and GHS in the recipient districts. Their execution has reinforced the collaboration between FAO and MoFA, the Women in Agricultural Development Directorate (MoFA-WIAD), the Crops Research Institute (CSIR) and the University of Ghana. Local MoFA and GHS personnel were trained on nutrition-sensitive actions, which are now fully part of their work plans and monitoring activities.

IMPLEMENTATION OF WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

The COVID-19 pandemic, and the restrictions on movement put in place to contain it, hampered the implementation of activities, thereby necessitating a six-month no-cost extension of the project. To address the mobility restrictions, virtual consultation sessions were arranged, particularly for the identification of beneficiary groups.

All activities were completed within the planned budget.

FOLLOW-UP FOR GOVERNMENT ATTENTION

The long-term viability of the established home gardens requires continuous support from agricultural extension agents (AEAs) to ensure proper management and maintenance.

SUSTAINABILITY

1. Capacity development

A three-day training of trainers (ToT) on using home gardens for the production of nutrient-rich vegetable crops, in particular OFSP, improved the skills of 45 district AEAs and crop officers. The training addressed a range of topics, including crop production, post-harvest management and how to use specific nutrient-rich crops. In addition, the capacities of 75 MoFA and GHS staff were strengthened through sensitization sessions on the importance of consuming a range of nutrient-rich food for better nutrition and nutritional status. The skills acquired will ensure the sustainability of public actions directed at spreading awareness on the production and consumption of nutritious food.

2. Environmental sustainability

The establishment of home gardens did not involve clearing of forestland, nor the use of agrochemicals, but rather encouraged and promoted the use of compost manure and animal droppings.

Food demonstration and recipe development used energy sources that did not generate any greenhouse gas emissions that might pollute the atmosphere.

3. Technological sustainability

The project encouraged the use of cost-effective technologies utilizing locally accessible materials, such as discarded car tyres, empty containers and wooden boxes, to establish home gardens for the production of nutrient-rich food.



4. Economic sustainability

Food-based approaches were implemented throughout this project. A food-based approach recognizes the multiple benefits (nutritional, physiological, mental, social and cultural) that come from enjoying a variety of food, ensuring that people obtain not only the specific macro- or micronutrients present in the supplement, but also the whole range of energy, nutrients and non-nutrients that they contain. Since it relies on local value chains, such an approach is affordable for the most vulnerable households.



DOCUMENTS AND OUTREACH PRODUCTS

Documents

- ❑ **FAO.** October 2021. *Training Guide: Nutrition Education and Food Demonstration.* 82 pp.
- ❑ **FAO / Crop Research Institute (CSIR).** February 2021. *A guide for orange fleshed sweet potato (Ipomoea batatas L.) production and post-harvest utilization.* 36 pp.
- ❑ **FAO / University of Ghana.** March 2021. *Recommended practices for turkey berry (Solanum torvum) production in Ghana.* 11 pp.

Outreach Products

- ❑ **FAO.** October 2021. *Poster on community nutrition education for improved nutrition and health.* 10 pp.



ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS - LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Expected Impact	Sustained food and nutrition security and reduced rural poverty among women and vulnerable populations		
Outcome	Improved household food security and nutrition		
	Indicator	Number of children eating the minimum acceptable diet (food groups).	
	Baseline	28 percent of children have access to the minimum acceptable diet.	
	End Target	By the end of the project, the number of children eating the minimum acceptable diet (food groups) increased to 50 percent.	
	Comments and follow-up action to be taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Although the COVID-19 pandemic initially hindered delivery, all activities were completed prior to the closure of the project. – Households, with the support of the AEAs, are to ensure proper management and maintenance of the established home gardens. 	
Output 1	Increased public awareness on the importance of consuming nutrient-rich food		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of national and local (governmental and non-governmental) actors with enhanced capacities to organize nutrition education/campaigns.	At least three governmental and non-governmental institutions and agencies.	Yes
Baseline			
Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The capacities of 75 staff from MoFA (three staff per district) and from GHS (three staff per district) based in the 15 beneficiary districts were enhanced through sensitization workshops on the importance of consuming diversified nutrient-rich food for improved health and nutritional status. – Posters were designed and distributed to the 15 beneficiary districts to promote community nutrition education and awareness creation on the production and utilization of diversified nutrient-rich and biofortified food. 		
Activity 1.1	Enhance the capacity of MoFA and GHS staff and other stakeholders in nutrition education		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Two-day sensitization workshops took place at the district level in the 15 beneficiary districts, during which the capacities of 15 WIAD staff and 30 GHS officers were enhanced on how to improve nutrition and health by eating diversified and nutritious meals, using locally available food (in particular OFSP, green pawpaw and turkey berry).	
Activity 1.2	Nutrition education/awareness creation in the consumption of nutrient-rich and biofortified food, particularly OFSP		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A total of 1 100 participants (of whom 62 percent were women and 38 percent men) from different communities within the 15 beneficiary districts were sensitized on the consumption of healthy diets for the promotion of good health and nutritional status. Through a food demonstration exercise, they learned different recipes using native food and biofortification methods using OFSP. – Public awareness on the importance of consuming nutrient-rich food for improved health and nutrition was raised through messages broadcast via nine community radio stations within the Central, Eastern and Greater Accra regions, with coverage extended to the vulnerable communities within the 15 beneficiary districts. 	
Activity 1.3	Produce promotional materials such as leaflets, posters and manuals on production and utilization of nutrient-rich and biofortified food		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Two sets of posters on community nutrition education to promote production and utilization of nutrient-rich and biofortified food for improved health and nutrition were developed, printed and distributed to the 15 beneficiary districts. One set was provided to the District Health Directorate of the GHS and the other to the District Department of Agriculture in each of the 15 beneficiary districts for their routine community health and nutrition education.	

Output 2	Increased production and consumption of nutrient-rich food, particularly OFSP		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of households producing and consuming OFSP and nutrient-rich vegetables.	500	Partially
Baseline	While selected households did not have home gardens, some had farms located kilometres away from the home, mainly due to the presence of animals.		
Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The capacities of AEAs on home gardening techniques to support the production and utilization of nutrient-rich crops were enhanced – Locally available nutrient-rich crops with the potential to meet the nutritional needs of the beneficiaries were identified, selected and promoted in home gardens for easy adoption and utilization. A total of 482 home gardens were established and maintained across the 15 beneficiary districts. 		
Activity 2.1	Identification and selection of target districts/communities and groups		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	In consultation with the different offices of MoFA, GHS and other relevant stakeholders at the national, regional and district levels, 15 project districts (Diaso, Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese, Cape Coast, Efutu, Awutu Senya East, Kwahu South, Kwahu Afram Plains South, Upper West Akim, Birim North, Akwapim South, Ada East, Ada West, AMA, Kpone Katamanso and Ga West) were selected, based on their malnutrition profiles. In particular, 30 communities – two per district – were also selected.	
Activity 2.2	Identify other local nutrient-rich crops for promotion and adoption		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	In addition to the promotion of OFSP and turkey berries in each districts, each community selected two to three locally available nutrient-rich crops. These green leafy vegetables include gboma, ademe, carrot, cabbage and taro. Seeds and seedlings of crops from the selected commodities were supplied to districts. In particular, the District Department of Agriculture provided locally selected nutrient-rich crops to the beneficiary households, raised nursery beds for certain crops and supplied households with seedlings for transplanting for crops that could not be planted directly.	
Activity 2.3	Enhance the capacity of AEAs in production nutrient-rich crops, particularly OFSP and other vegetables		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	The capacities of 45 district AEAs and crop officers from the 15 beneficiary districts were enhanced through a three-day ToT on the production of nutrient-rich crops, particularly OFSP and other vegetables, through home gardens. The training covered production, post-harvest management and utilization of selected nutrient-rich crops.	
Activity 2.4	Train selected groups to establish and multiply planting materials of selected nutrient-rich crops such as OFSP in targeted communities		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Households in the selected communities within the 15 beneficiary districts were trained on how to establish and maintain home gardens for the production of selected nutrient-rich crops thanks to field demonstration exercises carried out by the AEAs. A total of 482 home gardens were established across the 15 districts, while seeds, seedlings and garden materials (such as nails and wire mesh) were supplied to the 500 beneficiary households. Delays in the completion of some home gardens were experienced due to the establishment of the nursery and the viability of certain seeds. The District Department of Agriculture of the beneficiary districts committed to building new nurseries and providing seedlings to the households in the next cropping season.	
Activity 2.5	Train women groups in the storage and preservation of nutrient-rich food including OFSP		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Women's groups, including school feeding caterers, were selected and trained on storage, preservation and utilization of selected nutrient-rich crops through the development of recipes and food demonstration trainings.	

Partnerships and Outreach

For more information, please contact: Reporting@fao.org

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