

PROMOTING ORANGE-FLESHED SWEET POTATO IN MOZAMBIQUE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RESPONSIVE PROGRAM FOR FARMERS AND MOTHERS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

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In Mozambique, vitamin A deficiency affects up to 69% of children under five years. Since 2006, the HarvestPlus Reaching End Users project in Zambezia Province has promoted the growing and consumption of orange-fleshed sweet potato (OFSP) as a beta-carotene rich food to help address this deficiency. The goal of the HarvestPlus project is to identify cost-effective and sustainable strategies for farmer adoption and consumer acceptance of the nutrient-dense, biofortified OFSP. Implementing through World Vision and Helen Keller International, the project disseminates planting material to farmers and trains them in production of OFSP while stimulating the market through training traders about the nutritional benefits of OFSP and linking them to producers. Mothers groups have been formed to train women in a range of nutrition and child care topics including infant and young child feeding, and promotion of vitamin A rich foods including OFSP. Extension staff (agriculture and nutrition) teaches community volunteers who in turn teach farmers and mothers of young children. Direct teaching between extension staff, volunteers and the target population is supplemented by community drama, radio programs and area wide promotional activities. Awareness raising materials (t-shirts, caps, sarongs, wall murals, marketing boards etc) have been used widely throughout the province to heighten awareness amongst the target families and general population regarding the OFSP. Marketing efforts have focused on strengthening the value chain for both fresh roots and processed products such as golden bread and juice. Monitoring and evaluation activities along with operational research in agriculture, marketing and demand creation has allowed the project to make course adjustments and to be responsive to the needs of the target population. Using the experience in Mozambique, HarvestPlus will now be able to develop a comprehensive and responsive program promoting other biofortified crops.

Keywords: Orange-fleshed sweet potato, Mozambique, reaching end users, biofortification.

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