
Growing Nutritious Food at Home

Families in Ebom, Nigeria Embrace Homestead Gardens

By SPRING/Nigeria



Photo credit: SPRING/Nigeria

SPRING Nutrition Coordinator Grace Essien visits a household vegetable garden in Ebom, Nigeria, where residents believed they could not grow their own food.

“I really appreciate the effort of the support group facilitator encouraging us to go into establishing vegetable gardens. The nutrition status of my family members including my grandchildren will improve since I will be feeding them with fresh vegetables from my garden.”

--Christian Ikpa, community leader

Connecting a Diverse Diet to Better Nutrition

After attending a training on optimal infant and young child feeding in September 2015, community volunteer Janet Nkanu was determined to help families in Ebom, Nigeria increase their dietary diversity by producing their own food. Implemented by the USAID-funded Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING) project, the training taught Janet and other community volunteers and health workers in the Abi Local Government Area how to work with families as they adopt better nutrition practices, including the consumption of a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables as well as animal-source protein.

The Critical Role of Support Groups

To encourage families to create homestead gardens and provide them with nutrition information, Janet formed the “Love Support Group” in February 2016. Through this group, she and SPRING Nutrition Coordinator Grace Essien teach infant and young child feeding practices and encourage members to help each other follow them. She also regularly provides one-on-one counseling to caregivers of households enrolled in programs for orphans and vulnerable children run by SPRING partner Health Initiative for Safety and Stability in Africa (HIFASS).

Though some community members were worried about poor soil and animals that might eat their crops, Janet was able to convince seven members of the Love Support Group to establish homestead

vegetable gardens to increase access to a quality, diverse diet and reduce household food costs.

To start their gardens, support group members planted fluted pumpkin, waterleaf, okra, pepper, tomatoes, garden egg, and mint leaves. These vegetables were chosen for their nutritional value and because they are easily grown at the household level.

Homestead Gardens Spread in Ebom

The success of the Love Support Group and Janet's work educating families about the nutritional value of vegetables and other vitamin A-rich foods have led other community members and neighbors to begin cultivating home gardens. Members of the support group anticipate a good yield when the vegetables are harvested. What they do not consume can be sold, making the crops a potential source of additional income for the families.

Funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, SPRING has provided technical support focusing on the first 1,000 days of life to prevent stunting and anemia in Nigeria since 2012. SPRING works in 104 local government areas across 16 states to strengthen community support systems by training community volunteers, establishing support groups, building the capacity of primary health care facilities in IYCF, and fostering linkages between support groups and facilities.



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The SPRING nutrition coordinator with one of the support group members in her garden.

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