

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK



Nnennaya Enyinna-Eneremadu

I am pleased to present the significant progress we made in the year 2023 in addressing food security and promoting the livelihood of rural women and youths through Economic Development, Food Security, Safe Motherhood, Sexual Reproductive Health, and Rights, Gender Equality, and social inclusion. Our organization remains committed to empowering rural communities and ensuring that everyone has access to surplus quality food and healthcare. I extend my honest appreciation to our dedicated staff, volunteers, and partners for their diligent efforts. Your support has been influential in driving meaningful change. Together, we can create a healthier, more food-secure future for all.

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

CARA Development Foundation is a non-profit organization which was founded in January 2014 with incorporated trustees at Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) on November 2014 with the vision of a healthy society free from poverty and food insecurity. We are driven by the mission to support local communities to achieve good health, reduce poverty, and attain food security for sustainable development. We maintain integrity, professionalism, partnership, excellence and sustainability in our aim to improve the lives of women and young people in the communities, through poverty reduction, Stimulate the Agricultural value chain to ensure food security in our communities and improve the lives of women through safe motherhood programs. CARA has a strong human resource with vast knowledge, discipline and expertise in Agriculture, advocacy among others. The CARA team has been trained by its donors on strategic stakeholders' engagements, initiating community actions for social change, analysis, monitoring and evaluation, and telling success stories.

INTRODUCTION

The CARA team in this year 2023, reached many set targets to promote sustainable development. The team worked with 58 Agro-dealers, to improve the livelihoods of smallholder cassava farmers in the Nine Niger Delta states. They connected 13,000 farmers with agro-dealers, input companies, and processors to improve access to quality inputs and markets. CARA facilitated an out-grower scheme of the farmer's multi-purpose cooperative society (FMCS) of Ukwuoma Ndigbo in Imo State, resulting in significant sales of over 326 bundles of cassava seeds, 17.870kg of cassava root sold to Dufil processing Company in Benin and 26,246.5 tons sold to the local processors in the state. They monitored and supported commercial seed entrepreneurs, leading to the sale/planting of 3595 bundles of improved stems in various localities in the Niger Delta region. They also facilitated Outcome monitoring assessments of 40 direct and control farmers to identify the level of farmers' adoption of farming practices. CARA anchored several other CSOs (Community and Youth Development Initiative (CYDI) in Imo State, Neighborhood Initiative for Women Advancement (NIWA) in Ebonyi State, Vicar Hope Foundation (VHF) in Abia State, and Cad Consulting) in Imo State, to advocate for increased agricultural budgets in Imo, Ondo, Akwa-Ibom and Ondo states respectively, conducted a Political Economy Analysis (PEA) across the states of intervention to



confirm the previous year's low budgetary allocation and identify the influencers, decision-makers and actors in the agricultural value chain. Equipped with the findings, CARA organized and facilitated a series of activities which included: Cluster coaching, a learning event, 2-day capacity building for CSOs and Media partners on Advocacy and Campaign Strategies, town hall meetings, Advocacy visits, state online and physical capacity building training of CARA staff, Agric Summit, CARA staff organizational strengthening and policy review, Bilateral discussion with Agric plus cluster, etc. and also provided capacity building for civil society organizations and media partners.

Additionally, CARA conducted life skills training in four community secondary schools: Comprehensive Secondary School Iho Dimeze Ikeduru LGA, Umuonyeali Community Secondary School Mbieri Mbaitolu LGA, Community Secondary School Owerri West LGA, and Orji Comprehensive Secondary School Uratta, Owerri North LGA in Imo State, to create a lifetime impact on the young persons to ensure informative decision-making that would affect their lives positively and also provided healthcare training for 50 women in two communities: Umulu-lfe Ezinihitte Mbaise LGA and Amafor Ohaji Egbema LGA.

CASSAVA INTERVENTION IN THE NIGER DELTA

Nigeria is the world's largest producer of cassava, and its production has been steadily increasing with 63 million metric tons since 2021 accounting for one-fifth of global production. About one-third of the total productivity in Nigeria comes from the Niger Delta region where cassava production, processing, and marketing are existing activities connecting small, medium and large-scale producers and processors. Cassava is a vital crop in Nigeria, particularly in the Niger Delta region, where it serves as a primary source of food, income, and livelihood for many families.

PIND initiated the cassava value chain to enhance food security and economic empowerment for the local communities to benefit poverty reduction and income generation. the following key interventions to support the improvement in Nigeria's cassava market: Increasing productivity through the dissemination of good agronomic practices for farmers' adoption, linking small-holder cassava farmers to large-scale processors for enhanced value chain, efficiency and increasing rewards to the poor farmers and the development of sustainable Agriculture on quality cassava seed value chain whereby farmers who are linked to processors) would purchase quality planting material provided by profitable certified seed entrepreneurs (CSEs).

GAP TRAINING

CARA Facilitated the PIND cassava intervention across the 9 Niger Delta state (Imo, Abia, Delta, Akwa-Ibom, Rivers, Bayelsa, Cross river, Ondo and Edo States) aimed to improve the livelihood of smallholder farmers. This year the CARA team with the support of the old service providers continued to identify new service providers who support to identify local communities where cassava intervention has not reached, we worked with 58 Agro-dealers/FSPs to reach a total number of 13,000 farmers, this new farmers were linked to Agro-dealers, input companies and Commercial seed entrepreneurs to purchase quality and affordable inputs ,they were also linked to small and large scale processor for market access.



OUT- GROWER SCHEME

The CARA team also continued to facilitate the out-grower scheme of the farmers multi-purpose cooperative society (FMCS) of Ukwuoma Ndigbo in Imo State to the extent of cassava seed and root harvesting, we recorded over 326 bundles of cassava seed sold for planting and 17.870kg of cassava root sold to Dufil processing Company in Benin and 26,246.5 tons sold to the local processors in the state.



COMMERCIAL SEED ENTERPRENURS

Additional 40 CSEs were trained by Umudike Seeds, to boost seed multiplication in the Niger Delta and create availability of improved stems for Smallholder farmers in the Region. By monitoring the growth and performance of over 40 trained commercial seed entrepreneurs across the states of the Niger Delta by NRCRI Umudike-Umuahia. Abia State, we are also responsible for creating linkages and facilitating enhanced access to improved cassava seed to smallholder farmers. Throughout the year, we recorded 3595 bundles of improved stems sold/planted by farmers in their various localities in the Niger Delta region.

OUTCOME MONITORING ASSESSMENT OF DIRECT AND CONTROL FARMERS

CARA team facilitated the Outcome monitoring assessment of 40 direct and control farmers in Imo, Ondo, Akwa-Ibom and Ondo respectively to identify the level of farmers adoption of the skill of Good Agronomic practices of cassava cultivation. These 40 farmers were selected in the 4 States of the cassava intervention to ascertain the possibilities of growth and development of the farmers after the introduction of GAP in the training provided by the communities

PARTNERSHIP

CARA team participated in the meeting where PIND partnered with Alana Green to deliver precision agricultural practices to smallholder farmers in an end-to-end method that enables farmers to increase yield, farm efficiencies, and prices at market. The partnership was created to ensure farmers' access to inputs and seeds while creating access to finance and market as a factor for enhanced productivity.



STRENGTHENING CIVIC ADVOCACY AND LOCAL ENGAGEMENT (SCALE)

The Agricultural sector is a very proficient sector in every state in Nigeria, in that it is the only means to ensure adequate food security. Over the past 5 years, the Agricultural Budgetary allocation has been stagnant within the range of 1% - 1.2% in all states. This percentage has not been sufficient in addressing the Agricultural sector needs which include; the need for technology, Agricultural value chain system and adequate market. In Nigeria 95% of farmers feed the nation, 88% are smallholder farmers and 70% of these farmers are women, contributing to 30% GDP. When there is an increase in the Agricultural Budget, it will lead to advancement in the Agricultural Sector, because there will be adequate funding for the purchase of modernized and mechanized equipment which will reduce stress and increase productivity.

The Agric budget plus cluster won a project by USAID Strengthening Civic Advocacy and Local Engagement (SCALE) being implemented by Palladium. A cluster of five organizations: CARA the anchor in Imo state, Community and Youth Development Initiative (CYDI) in Imo State, Neighborhood Initiative for Women Advancement (NIWA) in Ebonyi State, Vicar Hope Foundation (VHF) in Abia State and Cad Consulting demanded an increase of Agric budget to 5% in Imo, Abia, and Ebonyi States conducted a political Economy analysis (PEA) across the states of intervention to confirm the previous year's low budgetary allocation and identify the influencers, decision-makers and actors in the agricultural value chain.

Equipped with the findings, CARA being the anchor organised and facilitated series of activities which included: Cluster coaching, learning event, 2-day capacity building for CSOs and Media partners on Political Economic Analysis (PEA) and Advocacy Campaign Strategy, town hall meetings, Advocacy visit, state online and physical capacity building training of CARA staff, Agric Summit, CARA staff organizational strengthening and policy review, Bilateral discussion with Agric plus cluster, etc.

CLUSTER COACHING SESSIONS:

The cluster coaching sessions was an opportunity to measure the cluster's outputs and outcomes, lessons learnt and challenges during the course of implementation. The cluster engaged different assessment tools including; the outcome harvester, PEA tracker, and policy tracker, to reassess progress towards meeting targets, identified their areas of strength and weakness, and strategize their next action plan based on the current political economic analysis report, and re-affirmed the cluster declaration.





2-DAY CAPACITY BUILDING FOR CSO AND MEDIA PARTNERS ON POLITICAL ECONOMIC ANALYSIS (PEA), ADVOCACY, AND CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

The Agrig Budget plus Cluster organized a capacity-building workshop for the media and CSO partners in Imo, Abia, and Ebonyi State.

The training built the capacity of the participant on PEA, Advocacy, and campaign strategy also created the cluster’s awareness on advocacy intention, their objectives, and how they plan to achieve success.

As a crucial requirement of the workshop, the participants worked collectively to identify critical stakeholders (both primary and secondary) who should be engaged in the advocacy project, their contacts, and an outline of political and economic issues within the states that can influence the progress of the project either positively or negatively.





TOWN HALL MEETINGS

The Agric Budget Plus Cluster (AB+C) organized a town hall meeting in Abia and Ebonyi state for gubernatorial candidates and inter-party advisory committees to extract commitments and gain the support of aspirants that would lead to achieving an increase in the Agric Budget in the states if they are elected.



LEARNING EVENT

The learning event which discuss the impact of the existing agric budget and the need for an increase provided an avenue for learning and shared ideas from participants from different sectors including the legislature, CSOs, smallholder farmers, AFAN, the Ministry of Agric, and the Ministry of Budget and other relevant stakeholders who were able to sieve out key challenges in agriculture that a budget increase, release, and implementation can address. The event gained commitments from the participants who promised to support the project in any capacity their influence is needed to achieve success.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Working with stakeholders who have keyed into the project idea and are willing to support the cluster in whatever capacity they can, the cluster organized an online event to celebrate the international women's day (IWD). This event pointed out various capacity gaps affecting the participation of women in agricultural budget proposal drafting process. To bridge this identified gaps, the cluster organized a one-day capacity building on gender participatory and responsive budgeting.

ONE-DAY CAPACITY BUILDING ON GENDER PARTICIPATORY AND RESPONSIVE BUDGETING.

The workshop was organized in the 3 states of intervention (Imo, Abia and Ebonyi) to engage critical stakeholders (CSO, BMOs, PWDs, MDAs AFAN, SWOFON, and the Media), to gain an in-depth understanding of the budgeting process, participation procedure and gender responsiveness as related to budgeting in Agriculture.



STAKEHOLDERS SUMMIT ON SUSTAINING FOOD SECURITY THROUGH BUDGET INCREASE

The stakeholders summit on sustaining food security through budget increase organized in Imo State, Abia and Ebonyi states was to engage critical stakeholders (CSO, BMOs, PWDs, MDAs AFAN, SWOFON, ADP, commodity groups and the Media), to present the PEA survey result outlined after a professional analysis, this will determine the best approach to addressing the project for a budget increase in the Agric sector and the panel section and group works helped the cluster to determine the important areas in the value chain where the budget line can be developed from and the necessary steps to take to ensure that these budget lines are captured accurately to avoid it being removed when it is presented.





INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY RALLY

This event was organized by the Agric Budget plus Cluster to celebrate youths in Agriculture, from the various institutions in the state of intervention with the theme “Youths Involvement in Agriculture: A Step to Economic Development. The session aimed to promote agriculture as a link to food security and economic development, educate youths on Agribusiness strategies and procedures, and increase youths’ interest and commitment to agriculture. It provided a platform for the youths to change their perception of agriculture as well as gain more knowledge and information about investing in agribusiness.





BILATERAL DISCUSSION

Bilateral discussion with Agric plus cluster, After the bilateral discussions, the budget proposal was deliberated on, by the House of Assembly of the various states of intervention and approved by the state governors. The approved budget percentage calculated for the Ministries, Departments and Agencies in the Agric Sector are as follows:

States	2023	2024
Imo	1.7%	2.06%
Abia	2.1%	5.98%
Ebonyi	2.3%	5.98%



This year marked the end of the USAID Strengthening Civic Advocacy and Local Engagement (SCALE) been implemented by Palladium. The palladium team appreciated the significant efforts made by the Agric budget plus cluster in Agricultural sector across Imo, Abia and Ebonyi.



ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHENING/POLICY REVIEW

The existing policies of the organization was reviewed with the support of the Palladium officer, Dr. ThankGod Okosun to identify areas of improvement and ensure that the polices are effective in achieving the Organizational goals and promoting a strong and healthy work environment.



MONITORING AND EVALUATION TRAINING FOR CARA STAFF

A Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) training was organized to boost staff knowledge of the basics of monitoring and evaluation and its importance to the growth and calculated progress of an organization. The session was facilitated by the M&E Unit.



IN-SCHOOL TRAINING

CARA team organized life skills training in four community secondary schools: Comprehensive Secondary School Iho Dimeze Ikeduru LGA, Umuonyeali Community Secondary School, Mbieri Mbaitolu LGA, Community Secondary School Owerri West LGA, and Orji Comprehensive Secondary School Uratta, Owerri North LGA in Imo State.

The objective was to create a life time impact on the young persons to ensure informative decision-making that would affect their lives positively. Life skill training equip them with skill that can shape their mind set, Interest and priorities towards a part that will lead and enable them to grow into responsible adults while encouraging self-care and boosting their confidence and will for a brighter future.



SAFEMOTHERHOOD TRAINING

The team of CARA in view to support communities to achieve good health particularly women, mobilized several communities and conducted safe motherhood training among women especially those in their reproductive age with the support of the women leaders in two communities: Umulu-Ife Ezinihitte Mbaise LGA and Amafor Ohaji Egbema LGA, a total number 50 women were trained.

The Objective is to empower women and families, and improve access to quality health care. The training covered activities including various aspects of care throughout pregnancy and childbirth. Which provides for pre-concept care (nutritional counselling etc), prenatal care (vaccinations, etc), and skilled birth attendance (pain management options, etc



APPRECIATION

The CARA Development Foundation would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to everyone, who contributed to the success of our 2023 annual report

We are grateful for the tireless efforts of our staff, whose dedication and expertise have been instrumental to driving our mission forward.

We would also like to appreciate our donors (PIND Foundation and Palladium) partners and stakeholders for their unwavering support and trust in our organization.

Your contribution has strengthened the capacity of our organization and improved the livelihood of the small-scale farmer across the Niger region, we are proud of what we have achieved together and look forward to continuing our work in the year to come.

Thank you again for your support and commitment to our mission.



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