



Your Gifts at Work in Nigeria

Presbyterian gifts are at work supporting ministries of compassion, peace and justice around the world. Through One Great Hour of Sharing and gifts to the Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP), we and our partners are working to alleviate hunger and eliminate its causes. In reaching toward this goal, one of the ways Presbyterian gifts are at work is through grants that support partners working in their home countries to bring about transformation.

In 2015, PHP is supporting a project in Nigeria, in partnership with the Smallholders Foundation (SF). This grant was made possible thanks to a gift to the Hunger Program from the Presbyterian Church of Danville in Kentucky.

Agriculture is the typical means of livelihood for women farmers in the area, but with a short 3-4 months of rain as the main water source, high labor cost, a single planting season, and poor input availability, many smallholders' farms do not yield enough for them and their families. The results are increasing poverty, hunger, and malnutrition among women and children.

Project Goal: to offer training for rural women on sustainable farming, entrepreneurship and managerial skills; and to establish a catfish and pineapple farm that will be an alternative source of income and food supply.

Training

Sixty rural women smallholder farmers in Obokwe, Ngor Okpala, were participants in the project. Training for the women smallholder farmers included topics such as:

- Practical lessons in fish and pineapple farming (fish nutrition, water quality, fertilizer, drugs and vaccines, species selection, reproduction, harvesting; pineapple and vegetable placing and spacing.)
- Making fish feed.
- Entrepreneurial and managerial skills (book keeping, banking, market survey, business plan design, sustainable marketing channels,) allowing the women to become sole proprietors of their own farms.

The Farm

With the training and guidance of three experienced SF staff/volunteer members, 60 women participated in all facets of establishing a 3,000 capacity catfish and 500 pineapple stands farm. This included:

- Clearing and fertilizing the land for pineapple planting.
- Purchase of pineapple suckers from the Imo State (local) agricultural development program.
- Marking/planting of 2,500 pineapple suckers.
- Marking/laying/designing ponds according to the quantity of fish that would occupy them.
- Supervision of the construction of the pond and tank

stand. Labor for pond building was provided by community elders, and the land for the pond was donated by the community.

- Specification of the fish fingerlings, farming tools and equipment they would need; getting quotes for the purchase of these items.

A Community Fish Farm Fund (savings account) was established for the women, with three of the women democratically chosen as signatories. The fund is used to maintain fish farm equipment and surroundings, purchase feed, restock, build additional ponds, pay for marketing, and pay the women. Half the fund is for loans so the women can start up similar fish farms at their own homes.



Photos: SF

Impact

The addition of the fish and pineapple farm is providing an alternative source of income and food for the 60 participants as well as other households where the women have shared their knowledge and skills. Already the benefits have reached 200 households.

60% of the trained women have established their own fish farms using their own savings and the community fish farm fund. The women have hundreds to thousands of catfish in their ponds! Many already have identified buyers for their catfish in the second half of this year, and by September, 85% of the trained women will have received loans to begin their own ponds.

Mrs. Gift Lekweuwa shares,
"I did not go to school and have no vocational skills. All I know is how to farm. My participation in this project has really equipped me with skills in fish and pineapple farming. Now I can design a simple pond for myself and others, rear fish and generate income. I am happy that now I can live my dream of training my children in high institution and to the standard I want them to be."

The participants have been empowered to become economically independent and to increase livelihood for themselves and their households.

Please pray that the trust, unity, and team spirit that has been built among women and cooperatives in the community will continue.