

# Transforming the Health of Nigerian Communities Through Homestead Gardening

Ngozi Nkama, a mother of three who lives in Ebonyi State, Nigeria, had difficulty finding affordable, wholesome meals. As a result, her family was malnourished. After taking part in a Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria workshop, Ngozi and her family started a homestead garden, giving them access to a wider variety of nutrient-dense fruits and vegetables.

The homestead gardening solution can help many communities in Ebonyi State which lack access to fresh agricultural produce. Available food come at a high cost at market, so many families in these communities struggle to afford and consume an adequate diet.

Barriers to obtaining fresh foods contribute to malnutrition and an increased risk of non-communicable diseases, resulting in poor health outcomes and reduced quality of life in the state.



*A WDC member demonstrates how to cultivate okra.  
Credit: Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria*

---

*“Our community struggles with dietary ignorance and limited access to nutritious food. Many families rely on imported processed food from a far distance leading to lack of vital nutrients in their diets.”*

— Francis Agu, Umunaga Ward Development Committee Chairman, Ebonyi State

---

A homestead garden allows community members to grow vegetables and a few other food crops around their dwellings. Nutrition-sensitive agriculture through these gardens fosters dietary diversity and enhances access to nutrient-dense food sources.

Since 2019, Breakthrough ACTION, the United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID) global flagship social and behavior change (SBC) project, has worked in Nigeria to strengthen communities by engaging with Ward Development Committees (WDCs)—made up of religious, traditional leaders, and other prominent people.





*Community Members Participating in a practical home gardening Session. Credit: Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria*

In particular, Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria helps WDCs develop a Community Health Action Resource Plan (CHARP), which defines priority health challenges around reproductive, maternal, neonatal, and child health and nutrition and addresses barriers to the uptake of services. The CHARP is community-owned and informs activity planning, funding, and implementation.

In collaboration with the Ebonyi State Ministry of Health, Ebonyi State Primary Development Agency, Ebonyi Agricultural Development Programme, and USAID Feed the Future, Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria facilitated a workshop to teach WDCs and women leaders about agricultural best practices and homestead gardening. Through insights garnered during this session, the WDCs identified homestead gardening as a cost-effective and significant strategy to improve nutrition within their communities.

Starting a homestead garden can be intimidating, especially for those without much experience. Preparing fields and plots can take a lot of time and hard work, but once established, homestead gardens can flourish with minimal labor or input. In June 2022, the WDCs in Ebonyi State conducted community sensitization sessions in various wards, churches, schools, markets, and health facilities, reaching 2,000 community members. During these sessions, the WDCs provided guidance on establishing and maintaining homestead gardens, highlighted the importance of growing crops for maximum dietary diversity, and supported community structures in incorporating home gardening promotion activities into their work plans.

---

*“The homestead garden has been a lifesaver for my family. We now have access to fresh fruits and vegetables right in our backyard, which has made a positive difference in our health and well-being.”*

— Ngozi Nkama, Community Member, Umunaga Ward, Ebonyi State

---

Community volunteers, trained and supported by Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria, also play a central role in disseminating nutrition messages. Thanks to the work of community volunteers and WDCs, community members established over 1,094 flourishing homestead gardens by November 2022 throughout the four wards in Ohaozara local government area, demonstrating the success of the WDCs' efforts.

---

*“The transformation of our community into a nutritious oasis is a testament to the impact of homestead gardening and the dedication of the WDCs, as a result, families now have greater access to fresh, nutritious produce grown right in their own backyard. This has improved their diets and saved them money on expensive imported produce.”*

— Francis Agu, Umunaga WDC Chairman, Ebonyi State

---

The benefits of homestead gardening include social enrichment, moisture retention, labor decrease, reduction on dependence on external sources, and year-round vegetable production. As a next step, Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria plans to share the benefits of homestead gardening through additional sessions reaching four LGAs in Ebonyi State. The project plans to use learnings from the four wards in Ohaozara local government area for widespread adoption of nutrition-sensitive agricultural best practices as a long-term panacea for malnutrition.

This success story is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Breakthrough ACTION and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.