

Building Resilient Communities through Ward Development Committee Empowerment Activities

Challenge

Ganza is a community in the Feske Jaffeji Ward of the Arewa local government area (LGA) that lacks basic amenities like roads, water, electricity, and more. The inhabitants are largely peasant farmers. Women are mostly relegated to household chores; hence, they solely depend on their partners for their financial needs. Zainabu is one such woman. She is married to a traditional barber and struggles with her material and health needs. Zainabu says, “I will be glad to have a source of income that I can use to take care of myself and support my husband.”

Intervention

In August 2021, Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria, in collaboration with the State Primary Health Care Development Agency and Local Government Area Community Mobilization Team, introduced 20 Ward Development Committees (WDCs) to stage 2 of the Community Health Action Resource Plan (CHARP2) and supported them in developing action plans with a focus on effective leadership, management, governance, resource mobilization, social accountability, and gender equality. Subsequently, the group established Gender and Economic Empowerment Sub-committees. These were tasked with developing action plans that address gender and social norms in maternal, newborn, and child health plus nutrition issues, serving as peer educators, and supporting community-facility linkages for women, including implementing empowerment activities.



Gender and Economic Empowerment Sub-committees meet with women to discuss empowerment opportunities within their communities. Photo credit: Amina Bala, Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria

“The coming of Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria has changed our behaviors from negative to positive ones just as they seek to do. The main message I understand that this organization is sending to the WDCs during this CHARP2 training is ownership and self-reliance.”—Yakubu Samaila Karaye, Director of Primary Health Care, Arewa Local Government Area



Result

By late 2022, the Feske Jaffeji WDC embarked on an empowerment activity to train 132 women and girls on vocational skills specifically on the petroleum jelly production, rub balm ointment, room freshener, car wash, and local handwoven mats as part of their CHARP2 gender-related activities. An estimated 611 women and girls in total benefited from these empowerment activities in Kebbi State in 2022.

“The WDC is a committee we are very proud of. I was in Korage some months back when they trained us on how to make tom brown powder [traditional Nigerian porridge used to wean babies] and local mat. God is so kind I was opportune to be a part of their program today. The training on the production of [petroleum jelly] and rub balm will help in improving our economic status when we put into use. We thank God and the WDC for this achievement.”—Atika Rayyanu, Beneficiary of the Feske Jaffeji intervention



Community members participate in an economic empowerment session on making soap. Photo credit: Amina Bala, Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria

Zainabu was one of the beneficiaries of that vocational training. She now produces and sells petroleum jelly to wholesale and retailers.

Because she now has her own business, Zainab can meet her needs, take care of her children, and support her husband. He noted, “Throughout this season, I haven't bought [petroleum jelly] for the house because my wife produces it and she supports me too, which is a relief on me and it's all thanks to the skill acquisition training given to them by the WDC.”

Conclusion

Coaching WDCs on sustainable resource mobilization ventures contributed to household and community self-reliance by establishing small-scale businesses. Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria will expand the community capacity and strengthening using learnings from the initial 20 wards for the continuous promotion of self-reliance.

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