

ABSTRACT

AKWA IBOM OIL PALM PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

NNF designed the Oil Palm Productivity Improvement programme for Akwa Ibom State in 2003 to deal with the constraints identified along the oil palm commodity chain (from production to marketing) so as to improve the production and processing of oil palm products, improve livelihoods of the stakeholders (farmers, nursery operators, processors, fabricators, input suppliers etc.) along the chain and create wealth in the State. This project was supported by Mobil Producing Nigeria (MPN) Unlimited with a grant of \$150,000. This grant was matched by the United Nations Foundation with an equal amount of \$150,000.00.

Baseline studies and needs assessment were conducted in 4 communities (Ikot Oku Ikonno, Ikot Akpan Nkuk, Mbiota No 1, and Utu Abak) suggested by Mobil Producing Nigeria and Akwa Ibom State Government. Needs and technical assessments were undertaken on all the stakeholder groups (farmers, processors, fabricators and marketers) in the four communities to enable the determination of key activities that will lead to desired project outcomes. The communities were then evaluated using criteria that measured prospects for achievement of desired outcomes and sustainability for the project. From the evaluation, Ikot Akpan Nkuk was found to be the most appropriate community for the project and was therefore selected by MPN for project activities. Later Ikot Oku Ikonno was added as a second community to benefit from project activities.

The design of the project is such that there were some state-wide activities and some activities that were implemented in two (2) pilot communities. The state wide components involve cluster development and capacity building for nursery operators, input suppliers and machine fabricators. An oil palm cluster comprising oil palm farmers, nursery operators, oil palm processors, fabricators of oil palm machines and input suppliers was established in the state. More than sixty eight (68) oil palm farmers in Ukanafun and Ikot Oku Ikono were trained on modern techniques of oil palm production. They were provided with a total of 18,000 improved oil palm seedlings obtained from NIFOR, fertilizers and other inputs and extension services to ensure good performance of the oil palm plant. They were also supplied with cassava cuttings to ensure that they earn some income before they are able to derive benefits from the oil palm. Assistance to nursery operators was accomplished in collaboration with the state government and NIFOR.

Furthermore, twenty five (25) active nursery operators in the state were identified, trained on modern techniques of raising oil palm seedlings. They were then provided with a total of 50,000 sprouted oil palm nuts from NIFOR, as well as fertilizer and other inputs and extension support to ensure good yield. The nursery operators have successfully raised the seedlings and are selling them to oil palm farmers. Twenty six (26) fabricators of agricultural machines in the state have been trained in Scientific Equipment Development Institute (SEDI) Enugu and practically in the workshops on reading and interpreting design drawings and improved machine production technologies. The fabricators were then assisted practically in producing several improved oil palm processing machines for processors who are members of the oil palm cluster. One of the machines produced is the digester screw press which is a new technology developed by NIFOR for small and medium scale processors of oil palm. There is substantial improvement in the ability of the fabricators and the quality and effectiveness of the machines they are producing. Of all the equipment supplied to processors on this project only two digester screw presses were purchased from NIFOR. All other machines were produced by the trained fabricators in the state.

Eleven (11) oil palm processors (mostly women cooperative groups) have been assisted through practical

training on improved processing techniques, use and maintenance of processing machines and business management. They were also assisted through the provision of oil palm processing machines which include 3 digester screw presses, 9 palm fruit strippers, 18 sterilizer, 16 clarifier, 4 nut/fibre separator, 4 digester, 3 sets of palm nut cracker and 2 cutting platforms. A borehole was also provided for a major processing plant in Ukanafun owned by a women cooperative group; NNF monitored the different types of assistance being provided to cluster members during project period.

NNF designed and implemented a Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) for the project to ensure effective monitoring of project activities. Periodic monitoring activities were carried out at regular intervals to assess the level of performance of the project. NNF has an office in Uyo, which was primarily responsible for monitoring of project activities.

The targets and objectives set for the project were accomplished.