



Catalyzing Strengthened policy action for healthy Diets and resilience (CASCADe)

CASCADE PROJECT Success Stories



Ministry of Foreign Affairs



gain
Global Alliance for
Improved Nutrition



From Sacks to Success: Jamila's Family Journey with CASCADE

In Takur community of Dutse Local Government Area, Jigawa State, Malama Jamila Muhammed's story reflects the quiet but powerful impact of targeted agricultural and financial inclusion interventions on rural households.

Like many women in her community, Jamila faced persistent challenges in providing diverse and nutritious meals for her family. Household diets were largely limited to staple foods, with minimal access to vegetables and other micronutrient-rich crops. Despite her desire to improve her family's nutrition, limited access to land around her home constrained her ability to cultivate a traditional garden.

Her turning point came when her Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) was integrated into the CASCADE project. While initially drawn by the opportunity to save and access small loans, Jamila soon began to benefit from the project's capacity-building interventions.

Through structured trainings on vegetable production, Orange-Fleshed Sweet Potato (OFSP) production, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, and climate-smart farming practices, Jamila acquired practical, context-appropriate skills that transformed her approach to food production. A key innovation introduced during the training was sack farming—a low-cost, space-efficient method of cultivation suited to households with limited land.

Motivated by this knowledge, Jamila established a small sack garden within her compound. Using locally available materials, she cultivated OFSP alongside vegetables such as spinach, okra, pepper, and tomatoes. What began as a modest household experiment soon evolved into a productive micro-garden.

The results were immediate and significant. Household dietary diversity improved, with regular access to fresh vegetables and Vitamin A-rich OFSP. This not only enhanced the nutritional quality of family meals but also contributed to better health outcomes, particularly for her children.

Beyond improved nutrition, Jamila's initiative began generating economic value. As production increased, she started selling OFSP tubers and vines within her community. From a single production cycle, she now earns an estimated ~~N~~35,000–~~N~~50,000, providing a reliable supplementary income stream. These earnings have strengthened her financial resilience, enabling her to contribute more meaningfully to household expenses and child welfare.

Jamila's success has been reinforced by strong household support. Her husband plays an active role in maintaining the garden and supporting market engagement, underscoring the importance of inclusive household participation in sustaining women-led livelihood initiatives.

Today, Jamila's sack garden serves as a demonstration and learning site within the community. Fellow women and neighboring households frequently visit to observe and learn, facilitating organic knowledge transfer and peer-to-peer adoption of improved practices.

Jamila's journey illustrates the catalytic role of integrated interventions—combining financial inclusion, capacity building, and nutrition-sensitive agriculture—in driving sustainable change at the household level. Through the CASCADE project, she has transformed spatial limitations into productive assets, improved her family's nutrition, diversified income sources, and emerged as a local champion of innovation.

Her story is a testament to how empowering women with the right knowledge, tools, and support systems can yield lasting impacts on livelihoods, nutrition, and community resilience.



Pictures of Jamila in her home state gardens

Planting Hope: Zainab's Journey to Supporting Her Family and Inspiring Others

Zainab Abdullahi, a 45-year-old mother of eleven, lives in Gida Dubu community in Dutse Local Government Area. For many years, life was a struggle. Feeding such a large family was a daily challenge, and most meals were simple and lacked variety. Zainab often worried about how to provide better, more nutritious food for her children.

Her life began to change when her women's group (VSLA) joined the CASCADE project. Through the group, Zainab was quickly identified as a lead farmer due to her proactiveness and was invited for good agronomic practice for the production of vegetable and OFSP and was encouragement to try small-scale farming. At first, she planted just for her family, hoping to improve the meals she prepared at home.

Gradually, her efforts began to pay off. The crops she grew allowed her children to eat better, and she even started earning a little income from her farm. With time, Zainab saved enough to acquire a small piece of land and buy an ewe at N35,000, a step that filled her with pride and hope for the future.

As she gained experience, Zainab became a vine multiplier, producing and selling Orange-Fleshed Sweet Potato (OFSP) vines to other farmers in her community and occasionally to development projects. This not only increased her income but also helped other farmers start growing OFSP, spreading the benefits further.

Today, Zainab has thriving all-year-round gardens and keeps small ruminants, complementing her farming success and ensuring her family has a continuous supply of nutritious food. Her progress soon inspired other women in her group. Seeing Zainab's life improve encouraged many to start backyard gardening, growing food to support their own families.

"I never thought farming could change my life like this," Zainab says with a smile. "Now I contribute to feeding my children, earn some income, and even help others start farming too."

Zainab is now a role model in her community. What began as a small effort to feed her family has grown into a source of hope and inspiration. Her journey shows that with support, determination, and small steps, meaningful change is possible not just for one family, but for an entire community.



Pictures of excited Zainab with her flock and garden

Ruqayya's Backyard of Hope

In Aujara, a quiet town in Jigawa State's Jahun local government area, Ruqayya Mohamed Inuwa faced a struggle most mothers know all too well—how do you give your family healthy food when there just isn't much to work with?

She had five kids, and getting fresh veggies wasn't simple. Meals repeated themselves, and a balanced diet felt like an impossible dream. Like a lot of her neighbors, Ruqayya just did her best with what little she had.

Everything shifted when the CASCADE project arrived. Suddenly, “farming smart” wasn't just talk—it was something she could do in her own backyard. Good seeds, sweet potato vines, organic fertilizers, even natural pesticides—tools and ideas she'd never had before. For the first time, Ruqayya started to feel hope. She learned, she planned, and she got to work.

She started small, on a scrappy little patch behind the house. She turned the soil, mixed in compost and fertilizer, sprayed her plants with natural solutions to keep bugs away. Her husband rolled up his sleeves, too. Together, they planted, watered, and watched that bare earth turns green, little by little.

The changes crept up fast. Suddenly, the family had fresh vegetables at dinner, and sweet potatoes packed with nutrition. Ruqayya wasn't just filling plates—she was helping her family feel healthier and stronger. What once seemed impossible sprouted right outside their kitchen.

Then something unexpected happened. The garden produced more than they needed. Ruqayya began selling extra vegetables and sweet potato vines, earning between ₦25,000 and ₦40,000 every cycle. It wasn't going to make her rich, but for her family, that income made a real, everyday difference.

Pretty soon, the whole community took notice. Neighbors stopped by to see her garden for themselves. Ruqayya and her husband welcomed their questions. They explained everything—fertilizing organically, keeping out pests without harsh chemicals, making even a tiny bit of land well worth the effort.

Looking back, Ruqayya says, “I started with just a small space. Now it feeds my family, keeps us going, and everything we grow is healthy and safe.”

She isn't just a backyard gardener anymore. Out in Aujara, Ruqayya's plot is a symbol—a quiet, constant reminder that you can start from almost nothing and change everything, as long as you've got the right help and some teamwork at home. Her story makes it clear: with a bit of knowledge and the right seeds, you really can turn hope into something you can see, touch, and taste.

Thanks to the CASCADE project, Ruqayya's backyard is now a place where hope grows, a new source of income, and a reason for her neighbors to believe they can do the same.



Pictures Malama Ruqayya in her vegetable garden

ACHIEVEMENT MATRIX

Strategic Objective	Key Activities Implemented	Quantitative Outputs	Outcomes / Achievements	Evidence of Impact	Strategic Value / Sustainability
Improve food security among vulnerable rural women and households	Trained women in vegetable farming, OFSP cultivation, backyard gardening, and sack farming techniques	485 women trained in vegetable production; 487 women trained in OFSP cultivation	972 women became active food producers within one production cycle	Daily vegetable consumption increased from 12% to 78% among participating households	Established sustainable household food systems using low-cost, climate-smart agriculture
Increase access to nutrient-rich foods and reduce malnutrition	Introduced Orange-Fleshed Sweet Potato (OFSP), poultry-based nutrition, and nutrition-sensitive agriculture	Distribution of OFSP vines, seeds, and organic fertilizers to beneficiaries	Participating households increased intake of vitamin A-rich foods and protein sources	Households moved from near-zero consumption of OFSP and eggs to 3-4 times weekly consumption	Supports SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and aligns with national nutrition priorities through CS-SUNN
Promote women's economic empowerment through agriculture	Distributed productive agricultural inputs and poultry assets; trained women in income-generating farming activities	3,000 Noilier birds distributed to 370 women across 15 organized groups	Women established new income streams through egg sales, vegetables, OFSP vines, and poultry	Beneficiaries earned between ₦25,000-₦50,000 per production cycle	Women gained financial independence and improved household bargaining power
Expand women's participation in agriculture despite land limitations	Introduced sack farming and backyard gardening models suitable for landless women	Hundreds of sack gardens and micro-plots established	Women without land ownership became active producers	Jamila transformed sack farming into a micro-enterprise earning up to ₦50,000 per cycle	Demonstrated a scalable "no-land agriculture" model for Northern Nigeria

Strengthen household nutrition resilience	Integrated poultry with crop production systems	Women trained in poultry management, feeding, disease prevention, and small-scale agribusiness	Increased access to eggs, manure, and diversified household diets	Families reported reduced food scarcity and improved dietary diversity	Circular food system created through integration of crops and poultry
Build women’s leadership and decision-making capacity	Formation and activation of women farmer groups and peer learning systems	15 women’s groups activated across 8 LGAs	Women began participating more actively in household decisions regarding education, healthcare, and food expenditure	Qualitative interviews showed increased respect for women’s economic contributions within households	Created long-term social transformation beyond agricultural productivity
Develop community-based agricultural knowledge systems	Trained lead farmers and peer trainers through CS-SUNN-supported frameworks	Lead farmers identified and integrated into CS-SUNN network	Beneficiaries evolved into community trainers and mentors	Jamila, Zainab, and Ruqayya became local peer educators	Ensures replication and continuity after project completion
Strengthen community-level nutrition systems through partnerships	Collaboration with CS-SUNN, CARE International, GAIN, East-West Seed, and Jigawa State Ministry of Agriculture	Multi-stakeholder implementation across 8 LGAs	Improved technical quality, monitoring, and access to best practices	Alignment with national nutrition coordination systems through CS-SUNN	Partnership model enables scale-up across 30 Nigerian states
Improve agricultural productivity using climate-smart approaches	Training in soil preparation, organic pest control, post-harvest handling, and climate-resilient farming methods	Climate-smart practices adopted by all trained beneficiaries	Reduced production losses and improved crop yield quality	Women sustained production despite limited land and economic constraints	Enhances long-term resilience to climate and economic shocks
Establish scalable and replicable anti-hunger	Leveraged CS-SUNN’s existing network and	Intervention reached 1,342 women in one year	Demonstrated rapid impact without lengthy	Proven operational model documented	Built foundation for regional expansion

intervention model	monitoring infrastructure		community-entry delays	for replication in additional states	across Northern Nigeria
Reduce dependency and strengthen self-reliance among women	Asset transfer approach using seeds, fertilizers, and live birds instead of loan-based support	Productive assets transferred directly to beneficiaries	Women transitioned from aid recipients to micro-entrepreneurs	Beneficiaries invested profits into livestock, land acquisition, and household welfare	Created locally owned economic ecosystems rather than temporary aid structures
Contribute to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Integrated poverty reduction, nutrition, gender empowerment, and livelihood interventions	1,342 women directly impacted	Simultaneous progress on poverty reduction and food security indicators	Increased incomes, improved nutrition, and strengthened women's agency	Direct contribution to SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)

Key Headline Achievements

- **1,342 rural women empowered** through agriculture and nutrition interventions.
- **972 women actively cultivating nutrient-rich crops.**
- **370 women managing poultry enterprises** with 3,000 Noiler birds distributed.
- **8 Local Government Areas reached** across Jigawa State.
- **15 women's agricultural groups activated**
- **Daily vegetable consumption increased from 12% to 78%** among participating households.
- **Women generating ₦25,000–₦50,000 income per cycle** from farming and poultry activities.
- **Scalable intervention model established** through the CS-SUNN network across 30 Nigerian states.