THE NUTRITION PROJECT:
Stories of Change
Transforming Lives Through Nutrition

In the serene village of Daapchi, nestled within the heart of Nigeria, ActionAid embarked on a transformative journey to scale up access to critical lifesaving nutrition assistance. The Nutrition Project, funded by the National Humanitarian Fund, aimed to improve the nutrition status of children aged 6-59 months, pregnant and lactating women through integrated nutrition activities.

Yosana, a dedicated member of the community, found herself at the forefront of this initiative. Trained as a volunteer and later appointed as a community nutrition supervisor, Yosana embraced her role with unwavering commitment.

“When ActionAid visited our community to commence the nutrition project, I was eager to contribute to the well-being of our children and mothers. My role began working community nutrition mobilisers on active case finding. We go house to house and conduct screening based on how ActionAid has taught us. Our goal is to identify children who are severely or mildly malnourished. For those with complications, we ensure they receive immediate care at the stabilisation center, while those without complications are directed to the Outpatient Therapeutic Programme.”

Yosana’s commitment goes beyond screening; she also leads support group meetings, creating a safe environment for women in the community to address various issues, including the significance of exclusive breastfeeding and family planning. She emphasizes that “The support group meetings offer a platform for women to exchange knowledge and provide mutual support, fostering a sense of solidarity within the community. With the support of ActionAid Nigeria, I’ve been actively involved in supporting the women for about two years. Through this outreach, I have also successfully referred approximately 50 individuals to the targeted supplementary feeding programme and 20 to the stabilisation center. I’m proud to report that all those I’ve referred are pro-
gressive well. Among them is Fatima Amsan, whose story is particularly inspir-
ing.”

32-year-old Fatima acknowledges that meeting Yogana was a lifesaving en-
counter for her and her family, particularly her children. She recounts, "I've been married for 18 years and have five children – four boys and one girl. I'm thankful to ActionAid for their support. While my first four births were without compulsion, my last daughter has been unwell since birth. We sought medi-
cal help from various hospitals, but there was no significant improvement. Then, someone from ActionAid, whom I later learned was a Communication Nutrition Mobiliser, visited our home during a community outreach and screened my daughter, leading us to the programme.

To my surprise, instead of medicine, we were given grains and taught how to process them. The community even received a grinding machine for seamless processing. Following the instructions, I started giving the grain to my daugh-
ter, and within a month, I noticed remarkable improvement. My husband was also amazed. I never imagined my daughter would survive, given her previous condition. Additionally, we were encouraged to form a support group, creating a safe space for women and girls to discuss topics like family planning and breastfeeding, empowering us through various phases. I am genuinely grate-
ful. ActionAid saved my child."
Rabbi, a mother of seven, vividly recalls the anxiety she felt after giving birth to her son, who was unusually small and fragile. "I knew there was a problem when I delivered him. He was tiny, and I couldn’t understand why. I was hesitant to let visitors come and see us because I didn’t want them to comment on his size. Despite struggling with lactation, I continued breastfeeding, unsure if he was getting enough milk. I couldn’t afford to seek medical help either," she recounted.

Her relief came when a community nutrition mobiliser visited their village, identifying her son as malnourished and promptly referring him to the programme. "I was given tom brown grains and taught how to prepare it. We would often return for more supplies, and my son underwent regular check-ups. In just a month, he began to look healthier and happier," Rabbi explained, her face glowing with gratitude.

Similarly, Fatima’s journey has been marked by tragedy, having lost two children to fever during infancy and toddlerhood. "After experiencing such devastating losses, I was filled with fear when my next child showed signs of poor growth. Our lives changed when ActionAid introduced us to the nutrition programme. Now, my daughter is thriving, and I couldn’t be happier," she shared, her eyes brimming with hope.

Through ActionAid’s intervention and the provision of nutritious grains, mothers like Rabbi and Fatima are witnessing transformative changes in their children’s health, offering them renewed optimism for the future.
Building HeForShe Allies in Daapchi

Two years ago, ActionAid Nigeria initiated the nutrition project in Daapchi. My involvement began with their mobilization of fathers and men into what we call the Father-to-Father Support Group. Here, we received training on how to support our wives during pregnancy, care for our sick children, manage relationships, and address sexual health. Additionally, we were educated on family planning, a concept relatively new to men in our community accustomed to minimal contraceptive use, resulting in close birth intervals between children. Personally, my wife’s current pregnancy, with a three-year gap from our last child, reflects the influence of this newfound knowledge from the support group.

An important aspect of our learning has been the encouragement to support our wives and children in pursuing their passions, be it in business, trade, or education. It’s remarkable to witness the transformation within our community, with women now actively engaged in entrepreneurial activities such as selling household items and foodstuff. These were tasks traditionally assigned to youths and exclusively just seen in the market, but now our women are thriving as entrepreneurs and even acquiring new skills.

This shift marks a significant step forward for our community, where both men and women are equal partners in development.