

1. Advocacy for Rural Farmers' Participation in FADAMA Programme in Akwa Ibom State

3 Farmers' Groups Access N9.1M FADAMA Grant



Andy Jackson Inuenwi, a member of Nka Uwam Piggery Group of Urue-Offong/Oruko LGA in Akwa Ibom State

We have just paid for a trailer-load of sand for the construction of our pigsty and once we are done with the construction, we would be able to access the second tranche of grant from FADAMA, says Andy Jackson Inuenwi of Nka-Uwam Piggery Group. "My group belongs to Eyulor FADAMA Community Association (FCA) and we have been praying to God since 2008 to benefit from the FADAMA Program, God answered our prayers in 2012. We are the first set to benefit from FADAMA Grant in Urue Offong/Oruko LGA".

The FADAMA program is one of World Bank's many initiatives to support the rural poor in Africa. Though, it is on record that Nigeria had already benefitted from the FADAMA I, II & III, a lot of the rural poor especially in the Niger Delta neither have adequate information on the program nor the skills needed to maximize the benefits of the initiative.

Likewise, the dividends of the FADAMA Program have eluded the community members of Urue Offong/Oruko LGA of Akwa Ibom since inception. Personal efforts made by some of its dwellers such as relocating to Oron LGA to enhance their participation yielded no result. In 2008, the hopes of the community members were raised on participating and benefitting from the FADAMA Program when the administration of Gov. Godswill Akpabio paid the Akwa Ibom State Counterpart funds contributions of N56 Million for FADAMA. In addition, Urue Offong/Oruko LGA was also selected as one of the LGAs to participate in FADAMA in the state. This development encouraged some of the community members to register their groups with the Bureau of Cooperatives, a major requirement for participation in the FADAMA Program. But before long, the hopes of these community members were dashed when the then incumbent Local Government Chairman of Urue Offong/Oruko LGA paid only half of the N2 Million counterpart fund contribution required for the participation of community members in any LGA.

Hopes came alive for the community members of Urue Offong/Oruko LGA once again when the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in conjunction with Foundation for Partnership Initiative in the Niger Delta (PIND) and Pact Nigeria funded Antof Rural Resource Development Centre (ARRDEC) to implement an Advocacy Project on FADAMA from October 2011 to March 2012. The project which was code-named "OFONG" sensitized the authorities of the 5 LGAs of Oro Nation, opinion leaders, religious leaders, farmers and would-be farmers on the need to buy into the FADAMA Program.

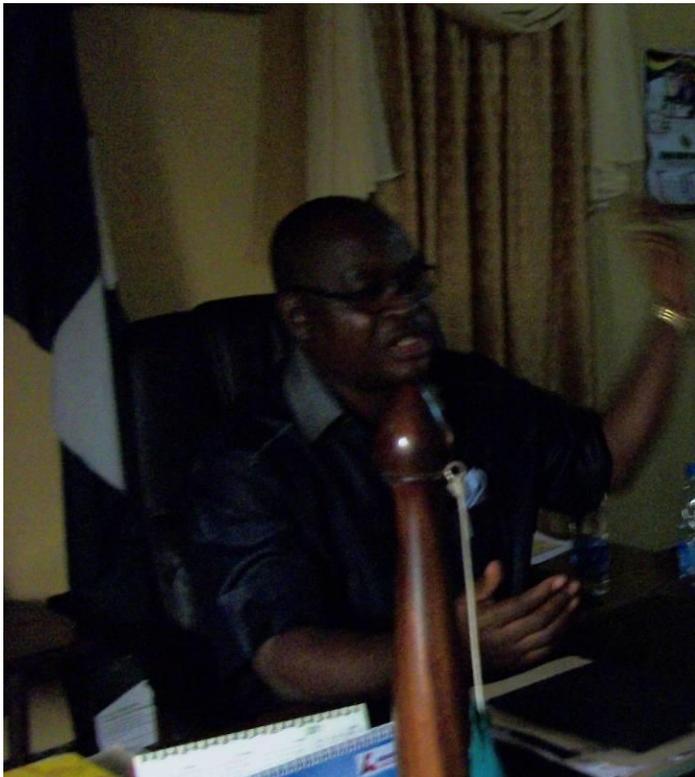
In addition, the Project OFONG trained and developed the capacity of nine hundred and sixty-four (964) farmers into FADAMA Community Associations (FCA) across the 5 LGAs of Oro Nation, Akwa Ibom State.

On May 21, 2012, rural farmers of Urue Offong/Oruko LGA comprised into Eyulor FADAMA Community Association (FCA) received a cheque of N4.4 Million naira from the Akwa Ibom State FADAMA Office as the first tranche of the N20M Grant expected from the FADAMA Program to enable them carry out agricultural activities which will foster their economic independence. Also in February 2013, Okossi FCA and Nka Nwana Atte FCA, both from Urue Offong Oruko LGA, received FADAMA Grants of N2.5M and N2.2M, respectively. These developments were as a result of the response of the Transition Chairman of Urue Offong/Oruko LGA, Chief Edet Isong, to the advocacy visits by ARRDEC to the Council Chairmen of the five LGAs in Oro nation, to revisit the FADAMA initiative for the benefits of their community members. Chief Edet Isong paid the LGA's counterpart contribution to the FADAMA Program in January 2012.

As more FCAs set to benefit from the FADAMA Programme in Urue Offong/Oruko LGA, ARRDEC believes the dividend of the USAID/PIND/Pact Nigeria-sponsored Advocacy on FADAMA will bring the needed peaceful and equitable socio-economic growth to the LGA.

2. Advocacy for Rural Farmers' Participation in FADAMA Programme in Akwa Ibom State

Urue-Offong LG Boss pays FADAMA Counterpart Fund



Chief Edet Isong, the Transition Chairman of Urue Offong/Oruko LGA, confirming the payment of the LGA's counterpart fund contribution on February 16, 2012

“In practice therefore, Chief Edet Okon Isong led transition committee has directly given over 2500 community members, majorly farmers and individuals involved in the agricultural chain in all respect, access to be supported through the FADAMA initiative ...”

As a way of justifying his commitment to the well being and prosperity of Urue Offong Oruko people, especially the poor and underserved, the Transition Chairman of the Local Government Area, Chief Edet Okon Isong, has recently responded to the clarion call by the Antof Rural Resource Development Centre (ARRDEC) to the Council Chairmen of the five LGAs in Oro nation to revisit the FADAMA initiative and explore its benefits for the common good of the people.

While confirming the payment of Urue Offong /Oruko LGA's counterpart fund contribution to the Fadama Grant in February 2012, Mr. Richard Sam, the State Coordinator of Akwa Ibom State FADAMA told ARRDEC team during a courtesy call on him at the Uyo office that Grants would soon be disbursed to benefitting farmers in the LGA. Earlier in the year, the Chairman of ARRDEC, Engineer Utin Ntofon, commended the Local Government Council boss for taking the bold step. He said the action would soon translate to visible benefits in the form of meaningful engagements and self reliance for the direct beneficiaries with an attendant peaceful and equitable social economic growth and development of the area.

Chief Edet Okon Isong led transition committee's 1 million Naira contribution to the FADAMA purse for the people of Urue Offong Oruko makes it a total of 2 million Naira so far contributed by the council authority to the the FADAMA Project since its inclusion as a benefiting LGA in 2009.

This achievement is worthy of note; the LGA is now credit-effective, paving the way for the state's FADAMA officials to fully process grant applications by farmers groups in the locality as existing

records has shown that the grant implementation has been practically stalled for the councils inability to meet its part of the agreement of making a contribution of 2million naira annually.

Ordinarily, farmers are supposed to group themselves under ten (10) FADAMA Community Associations (FCAs) from each Local Government Area benefitting from the FADAMA grant. These ten FCAs in some cases are made up of more than twenty five FADAMA User Groups (FUGs) while each FUG is made up of at least ten individual farmers. In practice therefore, Chief Edet Okon Isong led transition committee has directly given over 2500 community members, majorly farmers and individuals involved in the agricultural chain in all respect, access to be supported through the FADAMA initiative to increase productivity and improve quality of service thereby, contributing better through activities that promotes the socio-economic development of Oro Nation .

The program officer, Antof Rural Resource Development Centre (ARRDEC), Mrs. Elizabeth Adebajo has said that Operation Food for Oro Nation's Growth (OFONG), a USAID/PIND/Pact Nigeria-sponsored intervention, has so far given room for interactions with stakeholders in the FADAMA program at different levels with tangible results one of which was the timely response by the Transition Chairman of Urue Offong/Oruko LGA. She however was of the opinion that Oro Nation is yet to fully maximize the benefits FADAMA has presented to the locals since 2009. While only two of the five LGAs in Oro nation are presently entitled to resources from the grants, these two LGAs have made their contributions just once of the supposed three times in the past three years. She therefore, called on all especially the five LGAs' bosses to be united in this course while hoping that a lot could still be done to directly support families in the communities who are mostly farmers and traders in farm products between now and 2013 when FADAMA III finally winds up.

3. ARRDEC Mobilizing Rural Women for Sustainable Development of Akwa Ibom State.

More women dare commercial farming.....



Mrs. Theresa Frances Edet

This time, a lot of women are joining us and we have started thrift savings. We hope to support our farms and businesses through our contributions and I know we will make a lot of money this year.

Nka Nseghe Eyo Nsek in Udung Uko local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State is one of the many women farmer's group initiated as part of the FADAMA's requirement for farmers to be organized and registered before they could be supported. The group with Mrs. Theresa Frances Edet as the president was rejuvenated in 2011 when ARRDEC was first supported by USAID through PACT Nigeria to improve access to and use of the FADAMA Grant in Akwa Ibom state. Unfortunately Udung Uko LGA could not access the support because it was not registered with FADAMA at the onset of the program.

However, Mrs. Theresa said her engagement with the USAID/PACT Nigeria supported intervention by ARRDEC has changed her approach to farming a great deal. Mrs. Theresa said, *"I use to have a garden behind my house and when they said farmers should come to be supported I came also. But after the sessions with ARRDEC, I was motivated to buy cassava stems to plant and by the end of 2012 I made unexpected savings from my proceeds"*. The group is happy that government has accepted to support them through the government's initiated agricultural programs by accepting their Registration Certificate presented by ARRDEC. Thirty-one (31) Certificates of Registration, including that of Mrs. Theresa's Group, were presented to the Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Agriculture, Dr. Ita Akan, on January 15, 2013.

Mrs. Theresa's Group is, however, not relenting. Theresa said they have received some fertilizers and now so many women are joining the group because they run thrift program which they use to support their farms and business. As a result of the group's enlargement Theresa has started the establishment of new groups in Eyokponung with the hope of making large sales in 2013.