

## APIN's and MIED's Dynamic Approach to Ending Food Insecurity and Malnutrition in Benue State

*Using an integrated strategy of economic empowerment and healthy nutritional methods, APIN and its partner Community-Based Organization, MIED are taking the bull by the horns to reverse malnutrition especially among Under-5 Children Living With HIV (CLHIV) in Benue State.*



For vulnerable households in Benue State who live below the poverty line, balanced diets and three square meals a day are luxuries that they can only dream of. This infrequent food supply coupled with an existing HIV infection accelerates the onset of malnutrition especially in children under the age of 5.

In response, APIN and its partner Community-Based Organization, Mimidoo Initiative and Empowerment Development (MIED) designed a self-sustaining strategy to help vulnerable households earn incomes to support their basic needs such as food, and reverse malnutrition in HIV-infected and HIV-affected children.

With funding from the U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through the iCARES project, APIN and MIED launched a Communal farm initiative which involved providing agricultural education, extension services, and farming inputs to vulnerable households to increase food production, generate income and ensure that food banks have a year-round food supply. To ensure sustainability and ownership, APIN and MIED advocated to community leaders to contribute a piece of land and donate food items which would be stored in a community food bank.

*“Through food demonstrations, we educate our beneficiaries on the need for a balanced diet. The soya supplement was intended to complement their household nutrition, however, it has worked wonders and has averted hopeless situations within a very short time.*

- Mrs Dooshima Age  
Executive Director, MIED



The community donated a 200 feet by 400 feet piece of land which was used by project participants (caregivers and adolescents from HIV-affected and infected households) to cultivate groundnuts and soya beans. **At harvest, 3.5 bags of groundnut and 2.5 bags of soya beans were reaped.** A portion of the produce was sold and the money realized was used to purchase goats for rearing while the balance was used to produce a soya supplement which would

be distributed to caregivers with identified malnourished children. The other ingredients for the supplement (corn and millet) were obtained from the supply in the community food bank.

Within 4 weeks of the soya supplement intake, the malnourished children had gained considerable weight. MIED's Executive Director, Mrs. Dooshima Age explained that the vision behind the creation of the supplement was to provide a cost-effective means of improving the nutritional status of the project beneficiaries.



For Thomas and Movhinga, whose malnourished daughter, Nguemo, had been at the point of death before the soya supplement was administered to her, the soya supplement was nothing short of a miracle.

**“ We were helpless as we watched our daughter dying slowly, until your intervention with this miraculous powder which brought her back to life, Nguemo's recovery is like a miracle to us. ”**

- Mohvinga, Caregiver

Sandra, another caregiver whose baby had benefitted from the supplement insists that the “**magic milk**” is of immense nutritional benefits not only to children but adults alike. Following the testimonies of the beneficiaries, the demand for the soya supplement in the implementing communities has skyrocketed.

It has become a household staple in the implementing communities and even non-beneficiary households are eager to try the “miracle milk”. APIN and MIED continue to provide food demonstration and nutrition counseling sessions to ensure that malnutrition especially among Under-5 Children Living with HIV (CLHIV) is completely eradicated.

**“ This soya powder should be named the magic milk, because of the magic it worked on my baby within twenty-one (21) days of administration. I gave up on my baby since I didn't know what else to do but God, APIN and MIED didn't give up. Their intervention has opened my eyes to always use soya beans and other grains to make this milk for my (entire) household always. ”**

- Sandra, Caregiver