

INCREASING VITAMIN A INTAKE THROUGH PROMOTION OF ORANGE-FLESHED SWEETPOTATOES IN WESTERN KENYA: A WOMEN CENTERED APPROACH.

V. Hagenimana¹, M. A. Oyunga², K. Kurz³, and J. Low⁴

¹ International Potato Center (CIP), P.O. Box 25171, Nairobi, KENYA

² KARI, National Potato Research Center-Tigoni, P.O. Box 338, Limuru, KENYA

³ International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), Washington, USA

⁴ International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), c/o Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Faculdade de Agronomia e Engenharia Florestal, C.P. 257, Maputo, MOZAMBIQUE

Abstract

Helen Keller International (HKI) food frequency method, developed to yield understandable information about vitamin A deficiency and consumption of vitamin A-rich foods and be used to predict whether or not a nutritional deficiency is a public health problem in a population, was used to survey 15 communities in Ndhiwa division, Western Kenya. Results indicated that vitamin A intake is low--mean score of 4.0, well below the 6.0 cut-off for vitamin A deficiency of public health importance. Four orange-fleshed sweetpotato varieties were introduced to 20 women's groups in Ndhiwa and nearby Rongo. Half the women groups were randomly allocated to receive three interventions to promote orange sweetpotato--nutrition education, food processing, and participatory methods to identify and overcome barriers to produce and use the new varieties. In Ndhiwa, the HKI score of the intervention groups increased from 4.8 in April 1996 to 6.4 one year later, despite drought, while the control groups decreased from 4.6 to 2.4, a net increase of 3.8 units. In Rongo, initial scores were higher and the intervention groups decreased slightly (8.9 to 8.4), while the control groups dropped substantially (8.0 to 4.3), a net increase of 3.2 units.