



The **USAID Livelihoods, Agriculture and Health Interventions in Action (LAHIA) Project** (2012-2017) is managed and implemented by Save the Children, with its partner World Vision, in the Maradi Region of Niger. The 5-year project is funded by the USAID Office of Food for Peace with the goal to reduce food insecurity and malnutrition among poor, rural households (HH). The project is improving the nutritional status of children under 5 and pregnant and lactating women, increasing access to food for vulnerable HH, reducing vulnerability to shocks, and improving women’s participation at HH and community levels.

FOCUS: LAHIA’s main focus is on improving and transforming gender behaviors and norms at the household and community levels. Project interventions strive to facilitate changing perceptions, attitudes and behaviors that will lead to acceptance of women’s participation in household decisions, and achieving equity in access to and control of resources.

The project uses the established **Husbands’ School** approach to involve men as change agents in women’s reproductive health decisions and increase inter-couple dialogues. **Women’s Savings and Loan Groups** and the associated, **Small Businesses** increase social cohesion among women, while also increasing their economic status, leadership skills, and decision-making power. Project **Community Champions** also help create a community-wide dialogue about women’s roles in society. Women’s leadership is also evident from the local community institutions they now participate, in such as Village Development Committees, Village Early Warning System, and WASH Management Committees.

Husbands’ Schools: One method used to engage men in Niger is an activity called Husbands’ Schools. LAHIA used the United Nations Population Fund model and established its own version of Husbands’ Schools that are linked to the Niger Government’s Ministry of Health Department-level Health Centers.

Husbands’ Schools provide a safe space for information exchange and dialogue for men to discuss topics such as inter-couple communication at home; contraceptive methods; and pre-natal consultations, among other subjects. Husbands’ Schools have helped break taboos about inter-couple discussions about reproductive health and have become an important vehicle for social and behavior change.



Figure 1: Men attend class presented in a Husbands’ School. Here, two teachers lead the class using SBCC techniques that cover a variety of subjects..The concept of a Husbands’ School has been well received in the Maradi Region.

IMPROVING WOMEN’S ACCESS

- Facilitating formation and strengthening of 296 MMD groups
- Establishing 5 cowpea flour processing business enterprises (managed by 39 MMDs with 1,085 women)
- Supporting 10 grain milling business plans (managed by 49 MMDs with 1,313 women)

Villages have benefited from the Husbands’ Schools in tangible ways, as participants mobilized their communities to make improvements to the infrastructure at their local health center infrastructure, including the construction of exam rooms, housing for the head doctor, a storage unit, and a fence around the health center to keep roaming animals away. One village purchased a generator to be able to light the birthing room at night.

Women’s Savings and Loan Groups and Small Business Enterprises: [LAHIA’s women’s savings and loan groups](#),



called “Mata Masu Dubara” (meaning “Women on the Move” in the local language, Hausa), started at the beginning of the project. These groups increased social cohesion among women in the same village and created a platform for project-supported income generating activities. To date, 895 women have benefitted from business plan support from the project for activities such as cowpea product marketing and sales, small restaurants, trade, and small-scale grocery sales. 49 MMD groups were also granted grain mills and given training and introduced to the cowpea value chain. These activities have been wildly successful, with a local women’s group even winning a \$400 prize at a National Agriculture Festival for their innovative cowpea pasta dish.

The women involved in the cowpea activities have received formal business planning support from LAHIA and adult literacy classes through a partnership between LAHIA and the USAID-funded [REGIS-AG](#) project. The MMD groups and associated income generating activities have transformed women’s status in the community as participants increase their income, decision-making power, and voices in their household and communities.

Community Champions: LAHIA staff collaborate with local community leaders (religious leaders, village chiefs, commune authorities and others) to create a network of Community Champions for LAHIA’s gender SBCC messages. These leaders work closely with project staff to deliver specially curated messages to their communities that focus on shifting norms and behaviors. One successful example has been the religious leaders, or imams, who use scripture from the Qur’an to convince others in the community to improve the role and status of women. These “Islamic arguments” come from a respected text to which community members can relate, but that attempt to reframe the ways in which community members view and treat women. It is this critical mass of “voices” that helps begin the process of gender transformational activities that LAHIA believes can be scaled - given adequate time and



Figure 3: MMD members demonstrate how to make pasta from cowpea flower



Figure 2: MMD members show the tools they use to transform cowpeas into pasta, cookies, etc.

resources.

Contact:

Nivo Ranaivoarivelo | Chief of Party DFAP/LAHIA | Save the Children | [Office](#): +227-20-72-54-74 / 75 | [Email](#): nranaivoarivelo@savechildren.org

Jeff Gray | Africa Livelihoods Advisor | Save the Children | [Office](#): +1-202-794-1612 | [Email](#): jgray@savechildren.org