

Review Article

Food Basket Foundation International: Profile, mission statement and activities

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The Food Basket Foundation International (FBFI) is an indigenous non-governmental organization (NGO) which was set up to assist low income families, especially those from vulnerable groups, achieve nutrition security on a sustainable basis.

The Foundation was formed in 1988 by a group of professionals in nutrition, communication, medicine, the social sciences (economics, sociology, psychology), law and agriculture, based on the recognition that governments' efforts at providing basic needs to the poor and guaranteeing them opportunities to adequately feed themselves and their families contained a missing link between program planning and implementation. Food Basket Foundation International was registered in March 1989 under the Land Perpetual Succession Act CAP 98.

The fundamental objective of the FBFI is to create appropriate awareness among members of the public in an effort to influence government policies and programs to sustain the development of the grassroots. In addition, the Foundation initiates, and cooperates with, community-based organizations to bring about social and economic changes based on improvement in the traditional systems with which people are familiar for the attainment of food and nutrition security within a sustainable livelihood system.

Key words: Food Basket Foundation International, Africa, Nigeria, Food Security.

Major objectives of the Foundation

The major objectives of the Foundation are as follows:

1. To collect, analyse and disseminate information on agriculture, health, food and nutrition issues as they relate to food and nutrition security of the grassroots in Nigeria and other countries of the African region.
2. To provide training and development education for various organizations and the general public on the design and management of agriculture, health, food and nutrition issues in Africa.
3. To promote grassroots participation in development planning, skills acquisition and implementation of projects.
4. To facilitate peer education programs in secondary schools, polytechnics and universities which will promote the participation of youth in governance and the development process.
5. To organize leadership training for different groups to promote the effective management of their groups for sustainable development.
6. To prepare and produce development education materials on agriculture, health, food and nutrition issues to promote participatory approaches in relation to development projects for policy makers and various community-based groups.
7. To focus attention on the development of women in relation to access to public services and control of natural resources.
8. To document and initiate programs for children in especially difficult circumstances, including street and working children, children in motherless babies' homes, remand homes and prisons.
9. To promote youth employment through urban agriculture, vocational training and education.

10. To provide training in income-generating activities for women's groups to reduce poverty and promote proper governance and effective management of such projects.

11. To initiate poverty-reduction programs with community participation.

12. To initiate women and youth into development programs on education and reproductive health.

13. To collect, analyse and disseminate information on population, adolescent nutrition and health issues.

14. To pursue sustainable development using multisectoral, participatory and interdisciplinary approaches to problem identification, prioritization, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of people-centred programs.

Background

There are two fundamental principles that should guide development practice: (i) development is about people; and (ii) development must take into account the ultimate dependence of human societies upon their natural environment.

The various theories of development tested in practice during the last 50 years share the assumption that the goal of development is to replicate in 'developing' countries the model set by more 'developed' ones. Development would therefore be a linear process of 'catching up'. Thus, the most expedient approach to development would be to imitate those that are further ahead. Quite naturally, this approach privi-

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leges a top-down process of policy-making, even when the objective is to enhance the role of markets. It also generates an opposition between the modern and the traditional, the latter being considered as a hurdle to overcome. Finally, it sees investment in physical capital as the basis of progress, and relegates the human factor to a peripheral position, at least in the short term.

The alternatives to this approach to development recognise diversity: the possibility that there are many different tracks of development, even if in the long term the goals are the same. This places premium emphasis on the ability to innovate rather than imitate. Innovations do not come out of the blue but are typically derived from one's own previous experience. In this perspective, people acting as subjects of development take centre stage. Tradition is an asset on which to build, rather than a liability. It is these alternatives that can be put under the generic term of 'sustainable human development'.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, poverty and inequality continue to increase while the social fabric of family and community is disintegrating. Without adequate opportunities for productive employment, a major portion of humanity is marginalized from the mainstream social, political and economic processes of the societies in which they live: more than a billion people are consigned to lives of abject poverty throughout Africa, mostly women and children.

There is little hope that the situation is going to improve in the near future and, in this context, it seems unrealistic to expect that existing policies will result in the provision of adequate and satisfying jobs for everyone in the world who might want or need one.

A look at how people sustain their livelihoods day after day — what can be called people's everyday economics — provides, therefore, the basis for a criticism of the economic policies which focus on creating jobs by enhancing economic growth.

More constructively, the gap between job and livelihood, between the model and reality, is an opportunity for theoretical and institutional innovations. The concept of 'sustainable livelihoods' tries to convey this opportunity: that we can find the source of imagination for alleviating the social crisis.

This means, in particular, looking at the support provided by the social fabric, by the capacity of a community to organize itself and act collectively. The myriad of *ad hoc* institutional arrangements that exist at the local level and which provide direct support to people's livelihoods offer as many sources of social innovations on a larger scale. In short, shifting the focus from jobs to livelihoods opens new opportunities at the macro-social level among which it would be possible to devise strategies towards more environmentally sustainable, equitable and inclusive societies.

In order to understand the basis for making judgements for policy changes there is a need to focus on low income families and how they are coping with the realities of their situation. Such a focus will provide conceptual clarity on what is expected as an outcome of the policy changes.

Poor people are human beings with rights to a decent standard of living, as documented in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the 1965 Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Conventions. Similarly, several world conferences have identified and recom-

mended actions to reduce or eliminate poverty in order to improve human wellbeing.

The wellbeing of an individual is defined in terms of the mental, physical and social state which enables that individual to be productive, free from disease and thus able to access the opportunities available in that individual's environment. Thus, the first economic problem in any country is the production of the best possible human beings who are mentally and physically alert and able to use available resources to maintain a reasonable standard of living.

One of the key indicators of wellbeing is the nutritional status of the household members. This is because malnutrition and poverty are interchangeable and one can be used as a proxy for the other. If a livelihood system can guarantee the optimal health and nutrition of all members of a household such that none suffers from acute or severe malnutrition, then it can be assumed that the livelihood system generates sufficient income to fulfil the needs of the household members, especially the needs of women and children, who form the majority of those vulnerable to poverty.

The approach of sustainable livelihoods in addressing social issues, in a way that is compatible with environmental concerns, uses the level of productive opportunities as a criterion to assess progress. This level of productive opportunities, if attained, will guarantee that the vicious cycle of poverty consisting of low food production, poor agricultural practices, poor living conditions, poor environmental sanitation, decreased working capacity, poor nutrition knowledge and general education will be broken, with subsequent improvements in income and nutritional status.

Mission

The FBFI seeks to assist low-income families within the African region to attain a sustainable livelihood system which would reduce poverty, malnutrition and disease; promote participation and empowerment; and improve the access of the majority of the population to food, health, education, information, adequate nutrition as well as a good standard of living and quality of life for all members of their households as guaranteed in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1965 ECOSOC Conventions.

Philosophy

The FBFI believes that, as a facilitator organization, it should strive to build partnerships with other intermediary organizations, grassroots organizations, government and UN agencies, donors, community-based organizations and individuals who are working to improve the quality of life of all people. The FBFI also believes in accountability, sustainability, self-monitoring and control, which are necessary in order to provide a good example for other NGOs to emulate. In addition the Foundation believes that access to food and adequate nutrition is a basic human right which should not be denied, irrespective of race, colour, creed, family situation, political persuasion or other considerations. This philosophy is entrenched in the various international declarations and conventions to which many African countries are signatories.

Strategy

The basic strategy of FBFI is the creation of appropriate awareness among members of the public in order to influence

people's participation and government policies as well as programs for grassroots sustainable human development. In addition, FBFI will initiate, cause to be initiated, and cooperate with other NGOs, donors, government agencies and community level organizations to bring about social and economic changes compatible with good governance and a sustainable livelihood system based on improvements in the traditional systems with which people are familiar in the attainment of food and nutrition security, poverty reduction and freedom from disease through the following six basic areas of action:

1. Research, documentation, networking and information dissemination.
2. Training through workshops, seminars, conferences and short courses.
3. Community development programs of action in line with the agenda of the respective communities, NGOs, government agencies and donors with whom partnership has been developed.
4. Publications including newsletters, conference proceedings, research findings etc.
5. Capacity building for other NGOs, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and related institutions in order for them to be able to work better with communities.
6. Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Plans of Action arising from major international agreements.

In implementing this strategy, FBFI adopts a multisectoral approach to address the following social and economic issues in an integrated manner as they relate to human development and community improvements: poverty reduction; nutrition; health; education; water; environmental sanitation and food hygiene; income, work and expenditure; housing and environment; communication; cultural expressions and environment; and organization, participation and governance for effective management.

Organization structure

The Foundation has a general assembly comprising the members and associate members of the Foundation. Membership is open to those individuals who share the commitment, dedication, capacity for hardwork and selfless service required to meet the objectives of the Foundation. Membership is, however, by invitation based on nomination by two current members of the Foundation in accordance with the criteria adopted by the General Assembly which is the supreme body of the Foundation.

The Board of Trustees provides the broad guidelines for policy and program action and is appointed by the General Assembly. The Board of Directors provides specific policies and programs within the framework set by the Board of Trustees. The Executive Management Committee, headed by a chief executive who is also the Chairman of the Board of Directors, has the responsibility for the day-to-day administration of the activities of the Foundation.

The Executive Management Committee is made up of the Chief Executive and the heads of the various units of the Foundation, namely Research and Programs, Finance and Administration, Information, Public Relations and Library Services, as well as Zonal Coordinators. The Executive Management Committee provides program planning and seeks out partners to support these plans. Programs are imple-

mented in collaboration with grassroots organizations, donor agencies and community members. The Foundation is interested in networking and sharing experiences with other NGOs around the world.

The Foundation has a support staff of eight research/program officers working full time at the Headquarters office in Ibadan as well as five support staff. The Foundation also maintains a library together with a full-time Information Officer who is also the librarian. University students, other NGOs and members of the public have free access to the library to assist them in their research or programs.

In addition, FBFI has zonal coordinators in Ogun, Edo, Kaduna, Benue, Bauchi, Rivers, Abia and Enugu states who have the responsibility of coordinating the activities of the Foundation in the six zones of Nigeria.

Activities of Food Basket Foundation International

Research activities

- Characteristics of food vendors and consumers in Ibadan.
- Characteristics of food vendors in Ibadan, Kaduna and Lagos.
- Baseline survey of health, nutrition and sanitation in Akwa Ibom, Cross Rivers and Rivers states.
- Sustainability of UNICEF area-based programs in the B Zone, Nigeria.
- Access to basic health services in Ondo State, World Bank poverty assessment qualitative studies.
- Background paper on dietary intake and nutrition status assessment methodology.
- Background paper on the rights of children and women to adequate nutrition in Nigeria.
- Trends in social behaviour among adolescents in secondary schools within Ibadan municipality.
- Comparative baseline survey on nutrition, early childhood education and care in Sabongari, Mokola (Ago-Tapa) and Oranyan communities in Ibadan.
- Study on impact of structural adjustment program on breastfeeding and consumption pattern of mothers in Oyo State.
- Policy implications of women's workload time allocation, household caring capacity and urban violence in three cities of Oyo State, namely Ibadan, Oyo and Ogbomosho.
- Review of food and nutrition situation in Ondo, Oyo, Osun, Kaduna and Niger states.
- Sustainable Livelihood Project: Experiences on the attainment of sustainable good living conditions among farm families in Lagelu LGA of Oyo State and Uhunmwonde LGA, Edo State, Nigeria.
- Assessment of school feeding schemes with food vendors in Abeokuta, Aba, Benin City, Kaduna and Makurdi.

Training, seminars, conferences

- Seminar on a National Food Control System for Nigeria.
- National training workshop for Women on the Production and Sale of Street Foods.
- Workshop on the Role of Food Biotechnology in Meeting Future Food Supplies in Nigeria.
- Conference on the Promotion of People's Participation for Development.

- Workshop on Promoting Traditional Foods for Food and Nutrition Security in Nigeria.
- Conference on the Sustainable Development of the Ocean.
- Conference on Food, Nutrition, Health and Better Life for all Nigerians.
- Training in the Management of Street Foods Business in Nigeria.
- Conference on the Rights of Children and Women to Adequate Nutrition in Nigeria.
- Seminar for Proprietors and Caregivers of Day Care Centres on the Rights of Under Five Children to Adequate Nutrition.
- Workshop for Primary Health Care Workers on the Rights of Children and Women to Adequate Nutrition in Osun State.
- Workshops on the Rights of Women and Children to Adequate Nutrition in Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Kaduna and Niger States.
- Training of trainers course on Food Control, Safety and Consumer Protection.
- Training of trainers workshop on NGO Capacity Building.
- Seminar on Women's Entrepreneurship in Food Processing and Food Vending in South West Nigeria.
- Training of trainers of Women Groups in Food Processing for Income Generation.
- Campaign against Bush-burning in Ondo, Osun and Oyo States.
- Advocacy workshop on Policy Implications and Influence of Time Allocation and Workload of Women on Household Caring Capacity and Urban Violence.
- Workshop on Community Sustainable Livelihood Systems in Nigeria: Lessons for Micro-Economic Linkages and Policy Advocacy.
- Advocacy workshop on the Role of Local Government Authorities (LGAs) in Improving the Health and Sanitation of Street Food Vendors in Ibadan Municipality.
- Training of instructors of adult and non-formal education (AANFE) on Community-Based Health and Nutrition Education within an Adult Mass Literacy Program in Oyo, Bauchi, Ogun, Edo, Rivers, Kwara and Kano States.

Publications

Publications have include the following: *NGO Nutrition Newsletter*, *NGO Newslink* and several research findings and conference proceedings.

Community development activities

1. The Foundation has provided water through deep wells and toilet facilities (V.I.P. latrines) in several villages in the Akinyele local government area. This exercise is a continuous one as part of efforts to improve the access of low income families to basic services.
2. The Foundation has produced various documentary videos used in training and community enlightenment and advocacy. These include videos on street foods and recipe development from traditional foods to promote food security among low income families.
3. Sustainable livelihood program. As part of efforts to identify the critical elements of sustainability, the Foundation carried out a participatory contextual analysis of two communities who were facilitated by other NGOs who were providing microcredit. First was the Akeyan Community in

Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State, facilitated by the Farmers Development Union (FADU), and second was the Uhi Community in Ohunmwonde Local Government Area of Edo State, facilitated by the Lift Above Poverty Organization (LAPO). In the analysis, the impact of the activities of these two NGOs were evaluated and the linkages between micro level activities were linked with macro level policies of government as well as various institutions. In a participatory manner, the community organization and resources were identified as well as how the people used the various opportunities to improve their standard of living. It was established that the generation of additional income was not a sufficient condition to improve the standard of living of poor people. The fact that there were no baseline studies carried out by these NGOs before starting their microcredit interventions prevented a determination of the extent of the impact by the NGOs on the livelihood system of the communities.

4. The Foundation has been working with street food vendors in Ibadan municipality since 1989. Training has been the major activity, but in 1995/96 the Foundation undertook group formation to facilitate microcredit for micro-enterprise by the different food vendor associations. Currently, 16 groups have been formed in the five local government areas of Ibadan. Each group comprises 20 food vendors with each group electing its own executive members. The Foundation, in a participatory manner, is designing programs to reduce poverty within the communities where the food vendors live, providing access to basic services in addition to facilitating microcredit for enterprise development in the street food sector. The Foundation has initiated training of the executives of these associations in principles of good governance for participatory development.

5. The Foundation is working with the Food and Agricultural Organization's (FAO) Regional Office for Africa based in Accra, Ghana within Oyo State to implement a program titled 'Development of Community Based Technology Transfer Centres in Support of Food Production in Africa'. The aim of the program is to improve the access of small-scale food producers to new and innovative technologies through the establishment of demonstration farms at strategic points in homogeneous clusters/catchment areas in order to service low-income farmers using participatory and self-sustained local propagation techniques or methods. The main thrust is to fill the critical scientific and analytical gap in the area of small farmers' access to innovative technological packages and to gain an insight into fundamental problems connected with technology transfer for increased food production by small farmers. At present, five of the Technology Transfer Centres have been established and a 1-year cycle of cultivation comprising early and late season plantings has been completed. Two new clusters are in the process of being established in 1999.

Food Basket Foundation International membership of networks

The FBFI is a member of the following networks:

- WANahr — World Alliance for Nutrition and Human Rights
- NGO Action Committee on Child Survival Protection and Development, Oyo State, Nigeria

- NINCOF — Nigeria NGO Consultative Forum
- NGO Net Nigeria — electronic-based information sharing and dissemination network
- DEVNET — Development Information Network
- NEDNET — NGOs in Environment and Development Network.
- NIPRANET – Nigeria Participatory Rural Appraisal Network.
- GLONA – Global Nutrition Alliance

Partnership with donor agencies

The Foundation believes in achieving its objectives through partnership and networking with other organizations with similar objectives to those of the Foundation. Thus, partnerships have been developed with the FAO, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, Institute Francais Research Africain (IFRA) and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Lagos office, Nigeria. The Foundation has also received support twice, in 1991 and 1996, under the Small Embassy Grant Programme of the German Embassy and once, in 1990, from the Netherlands Embassy in Nigeria.

The partnership in each case focuses on different aspects of the Foundation's objectives. For example, collaboration with FAO has been mainly in the areas of research on street foods and traditional foods as well as support for conferences, seminars, and training workshops, while collaboration with UNICEF in Nigeria has been in the areas of conferences and seminars, evaluation of area-based programs on women, children and youth; publication of newsletters; advocacy and research for policy support. Research on adolescent reproductive health has to date been supported by IFRA. Collaboration with UNDP and IFAD has been on the conduct of baseline surveys on health, nutrition and sanitation on a project being funded for artisanal fishermen/women in Akwa Ibom, Cross River and Rivers states. The UNDP has also supported the training of instructors of adult education under its mass literacy program.

Thus trainers have been trained in Oyo, Bauchi and Ogun, and training is ongoing in Edo, Rivers, Kwara and Kano states. The training is on community-based health and nutrition education.

Partnership with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation since 1992 has been in the areas of advocacy on environmental issues as well as income-generating activities for women food vendors. Currently, the Foundation is working on the establishment of a food and nutrition network of NGOs and grassroots organizations active in promoting the nutrition security of low-income families in Nigeria. This is with a view to achieving coordination and monitoring of development activities by NGOs in Nigeria.

Sustainability

As a means of continuously financing FBFI programs when there is no donor support or donor support ends on a particu-

lar project, the Foundation offers the professional services of its members to other institutions, donors, NGOs, government and the private sectors on a consultancy basis. Contracts and sub-contracts to implement field programs are also accepted.

Funds generated from such activities are kept in a separate account and used whenever the need arises. Primary areas of interest for such consultancies include action-oriented research and surveys, capacity building through training, community-based program management, monitoring and evaluation as well as editorial services and publications.

Some of the activities under these areas are as follows:

1. Baseline Survey on Health, Nutrition and Sanitation of Artisanal Fishermen/women in Akwa Ibom, Cross River and Rivers States. 1993.

Client: UNDP/IFAD/Federal Ministry of Agriculture.

2. Evaluation of the Sustainability of Area Based Programs in UNICEF B Zone. 1993.

Client: UNICEF B Zone, Ibadan.

3. NGO Capacity Building in Oyo State, 1994.

Client: UNICEF Country Office, Lagos.

4. Access to Basic Health Services by the Poor in Ondo State. Poverty Assessment Qualitative Studies, 1994.

Client: World Bank/National Planning Commission, Lagos.

5. NGO Capacity Building for Selected NGOs in UNICEF B Zone (7 states), 1995.

Client: UNICEF B Zone, Ibadan.

6. Training of NGOs in non-Formal Education in Ibadan, Kaduna and Jos. 1996.

Client: UNICEF Country Office, Lagos.

7. Training of Instructors of Adult non-Formal Education on Community Based Health and Nutrition Education in Oyo State. 1996.

Client: UNDP/AANFE.

8. Assessment of School Feeding Schemes with Food Vendors in Abeokuta, Aba, Benin City, Kaduna and Makurdi. 1996/97

Client: Food and Agriculture Organization Technical Cooperation Programme, Rome, Italy.

9. Training of Instructors of Adult non-Formal Education on Community Based Health and Nutrition Education in Ogun, Edo, Kwara, Kano, Bauchi and Rivers States. 1997/98.

Client: UNDP/AANFE.

Financing support for Food Basket Foundation International programs

Funding of FBFI programs comes from membership contributions, donations and grants from international NGOs, international agencies, individuals, groups, industries and all those who believe in the objectives of FBFI and its plans for achieving those objectives.

The Foundation has enjoyed tax exempt status since 1990 and any organization wishing to make a donation towards any of FBFI's activities or wishing to work in partnership with the Foundation should write for further information to: Executive Chairman, FBFI, 46 Ondo Street, Old Bodija Estate, UI PO Box 4127, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.