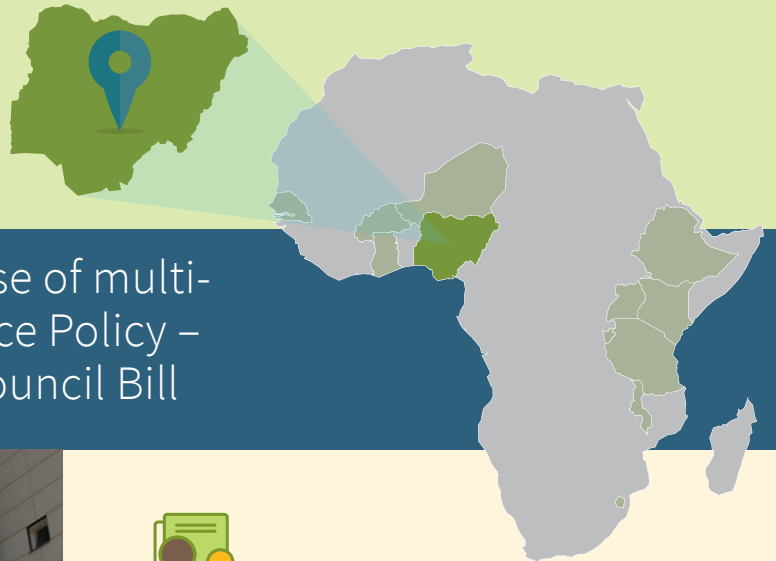


Learning note

Nigeria country project



Advocacy approaches and the use of multi-stakeholder platforms to influence Policy –
The Establishment of the Rice Council Bill



This Bill, which mandates the Rice Council to “**provide guidance on the rice research, comprehensive development of the rice sector and the organization of the rice stakeholders to enhance the local production of rice in Nigeria**” (Rice Council Bill, 2019), was developed after a series of successful advocacy steps.

The establishment of the Bill is a significant achievement for the country. Prior to the signing of the Rice Council Bill, a major challenge for Nigerian rice producers was the lack of investment, particularly foreign investment. Given that there was no security for investors, countries like Ghana received the majority of the investment as a result of their Rice Council Bill which ensured a level of security for foreign investments. Part of the responsibility, therefore, of the Nigerian Rice Council is to **encourage buying local, by placing a high tax on the importation of rice and/or ban the import of rice.**

Several groups in Nigeria came together and advocated for the establishment of the Rice Council Bill. After passing the first reading, the Senate stopped it. The RFS Nigeria project then put together key thoughts and advantages of the Rice Council and forwarded them to the Chairman of the Agriculture Committee of the Senate. **The Chairman agreed that the evidence was convincing enough for the Bill to be passed.** This is a significant policy achievement for the country.

Background

The RFS Nigeria Country project, **Fostering Sustainability and Resilience for food Security in the Savannah zones of Northern Nigeria**, has pioneered a successful advocacy approach, leveraging a co-ordinated multi-stakeholder platform to drive successful policy change.

The **key outcome of the advocacy efforts has been the establishment for the National Rice Development Council** which has a critical role in Nigeria in the regulation of rice importation and market pricing and addresses more sustainable agribusiness models in the wake of inflation and insecurity.

The National Rice Development Council, was developed for **sustainable food security, gender inclusion, quality control and climate adaptation** in Nigeria.

This Council has been signed into law, with the Rice Council Bill of Nigeria.



Figure 1: Shows how the Rice Council will revolutionize the rice value chain in Nigeria.



RFS advocacy team at work with House committee members.

From left to right: Rhoda Dia (project leader), Hajia Salamatu Garba and Aliyu speak at the House of Representatives.



What did we learn to make this sustainable?

Creating a multi-stakeholder platform with clear and easy means of communication is central to ensuring a unified voice among a variety of stakeholders. For example, the National Workshop for Establishment of Multi-stakeholder Gender-Sensitive platform was organized for key stakeholders in the nation’s food, nutrition security and climate smart agriculture value chain. Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs) are a tool of collective action which allows **“for structured collaboration between multiple actors from different sectors or who often otherwise may have inherently different interests”** (Hajia Garba, Lead Consultant of the Women Farmers Advancement Network). Stakeholders come together under the MSPs arrangement to address an issue that is common to all, typically delivering ‘collective good’ and, in most cases, MSPs generally emerge out of the realization that no one actor can tackle the issue alone. They require a systems level effort, drawing on different actors’ strengths.

Developing the platform is one step, however, to **ensure the momentum needed for successful advocacy campaigns. It is important to establish a clear roadmap and ensure frequent stakeholder engagements.** Ideally, these inclusive stakeholder engagements should be a combination of communication platforms, such as a WhatsApp group, but also regular virtual and/or physical meetings. A key success of the Rice Council advocacy work was hosting several national workshops. These workshops sought to engage stakeholders, building capacity and sharing experiences on food security in the region. Ultimately, these workshops contributed to the development of the legislation of the Rice Council. Within the **workshops, strategic groups were established to focus on specific questions and thematic areas to create a robust advocacy approach** that was well researched and convincingly articulated.

Examples of the structured working groups:



Rice Council Advocacy Committee team

This group **engaged the leadership of the Senate and House Committees on Agriculture and Rural Development; as well as line Ministries especially Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development** on the need to fast-track the passage of the National Rice Development Council Bill and support the establishment of the Council to strengthen local rice production capacity and enhance comprehensive development of the sector.



Research, Extension, Climate Change and Agroforestry Committee

This group **engaged the leadership of the House Committee on Agriculture, Research and Higher Institutions to table issues around enhancing Agricultural Research and Extension** to better support addressing environment, climate change, seed development and opening opportunities towards capacity building of extension workers to drive sustainable development and gender inclusivity to improve food and nutrition security in Nigeria.



Finance, Agriculture Mechanization and Linkages to Markets Committee

This group **engaged financial institutions such as NIRSAL, AFEX and commercial banks (STERLING BANK, JAIZ BANK)** to discuss possible agric-finance products that are gender inclusive, affordable, and suitable to the seasonal and climatic conditions of the actors along the agriculture value chain.

A key factor to successful advocacy is the need for adequate resources and contributions (professional services, time and funding), and therefore, the need for adequate budgeting for activities to be covered.



Key issues to consider in developing an advocacy strategy

- Defining an issue/cause
- Defining the target audience
- Defining stakeholders to find out who are your and who are allies and how to build support
- Identifying the communication channels of delivery, and response – to monitor results



Key components of advocacy

- Analysis
- Research
- Strategy
- Networking and coalition
- Lobbying
- Campaigning
- Mixing
- Media work
- Publications
- Conferences and seminars



Key tools of advocacy

- Letter writing
- Arranging face-to-face meetings with actors
- Demonstrations to showcase the pros and cons of the advocacy cause
- Media campaigns



The Key Steps to scaling this to other contexts

- 1 Engage stakeholders in discussions** (for example through workshops) on how to use the tool of advocacy to promote their collective interest, for example, the promotion of gender-inclusive food and nutrition security activities.
- 2 To ensure effective communication with all stakeholders**, it is recommended that a WhatsApp group (or similar) should be created for the platform.
- 3 Formally constitute an advocacy platform for the purposes of achieving the goals of the stakeholders.**
 - a. Elect an interim Executive Committee (ExCo) for the proposed multi-Stakeholder group or association** that will, through collaboration with all members, become the voice of your issue, (for example, the voice of all in food and nutrition security advocacy in the country).
 - b. Build consensus among stakeholders**, to ensure that the group collaborates effectively for the purpose of achieving the objectives of the platform.
 - c. The newly elected ExCo members should immediately go into action** for effective mobilization of all stakeholders for all activities required to achieve the Platform's objectives.
 - d. The ExCo should also ensure that general meetings**, either physical or virtual, if need be, are convened from time to time, for the purpose of achieving the objectives of the advocacy body.
- 4 Transform the group into a legal entity by formally registering it.** In Nigeria the formal registration was submitted to the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) as advocacy group for gender-inclusive food and nutrition security in Nigeria.
- 5 Develop an Advocacy Plan**, including the approach to engaging with government, and a roadmap towards reaching all the key players within a specific timeframe.
 - a. Clearly identify issues related to your advocacy topic.**
 - b. Identify effective means of approaching policy makers**, including exploring and enhancing specific advocacy activities and areas of cooperation for different ministries and key partners.
 - c. Through workshops/research symposiums/policy briefs etc., draw the attention of the policy makers to the priority areas** by making joint statements to stimulate a speedy and appropriate response to the priority issues you have identified.
 - d. Identify gaps in the allocation of resources.**
 - e. Support policy implementation and stay active on advocacy** to ensure that your identified issue (e.g. food security) is the highest priority in government, presenting opportunities for integrating the issue into wider development planning at the state and national levels.
 - f. Ensure gender-sensitive agenda and decision making are included in the plan**, including sufficient resources are allocated to specific issues of gender transformation.





Top tips for for successful advocacy approaches

- **Collect adequate information about the policy makers and other key interest groups** including email addresses and telephone numbers.
- **Make the advocacy materials simple, short and user-friendly** (including by adapting them to the audience).
- **Organise and attend meetings and other functions** where advocate may have access to key policy makers.
- **Identify allies and change agents**, and work with them.
- Link advocacy with **mass involvement** action.
- **Decentralise** mass action by, for instance, targeting actions at state and local government levels.
- **Be aware of the judicial process** to test and review laws.
- **Adopt a one-on-one advocacy approach.**
- **Network and build coalitions at sub-national level.**
- **Practice consistency, patience and long-term planning.**



ABOUT THIS KNOWLEDGE BRIEF

This brief is part of a series of knowledge products prepared by the Regional Hub project of the Resilient Food Systems programme. This brief falls under the Engage theme, with other knowledge products categorized under the other programme pillars (Act and Track), or within a Cross-cutting tag.



Our programme website allows easy access to these resources.