

INTRODUCTION

Ahead of the 2019 General elections, the socio-political landscape of the country is fraught with several security situations and agitations for sustainable development in the economic sphere including the agricultural sector. It has been recognized that enhanced agricultural performance in the country is key to growth and poverty reduction through its direct impact on increasing job opportunities, especially for women and youth; food security and improved nutrition.

The ability of the Federal and State Government to formulate good agricultural policies and effectively implement the agricultural sector strategies of the polices is crucial, taking into consideration the challenges associated with climate change and its effect on food production. In furtherance to this, the need to improve agriculture policies, increase the country's agriculture budget allocation to 6%, and make access to food a recognized right in the Nigerian constitution becomes imperative. As shown by statistics, smallholder farmers constitute over 75% of the electorates, thus making the constituency the largest voting population in Nigeria.

Political Parties in Nigeria have however concluded their Primary elections ahead of the forthcoming elections, with specific political party flag-bearers known. The Farmers MANIFESTO, a key document on the specific needs of Nigerian farmers is seen as a basis for a bargain between farmers and political office seekers, prior and after elections.

The Farmers Manifesto would serve as a veritable instrument for farmers across States to hold Political office aspirants accountable to their actions or inactions as it relates to the interest of farmers, all in a bid revitalize the Agricultural sector.

However, commitments from Political Party Aspirants/Policy makers to mainstream the needs of SSF into Government's existing policy on agriculture will go a long way to boost food security.

In view of this, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, Nigeria (WANEP-Nigeria) in collaboration with the Kebbi Community Action with support from OXFAM implemented several activities in Kebbi State including; a Sensitization Workshop on the Farmers Manifesto; Advocacy visits to the State House of Assembly, PVC Stunt/Rally and Courtesy visits to the Kebbi Television Station. The engagement will serve as a platform for farmers to show their PVC (*Operation show your PVC*) in a bid to ensure that they vote at the 2019 General elections.

The sensitization workshop was held on the 25th October 2018 in Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi State. The workshop had in attendance 125 participants comprising of 93 males and 32 females. Participants comprising of Small Scale Farmers (Matasa Farmer group, SS Farmers Association, Taimakon Kai-Dakai Farmers), Rayyan Farm, youth groups from political parties and a Political Party Aspirant were drawn from three LGA's (Kalgo, Birnin Kebbi and Jega LGAs) in the State. (see annex the participant list)

OBJECTIVES:

- To promote issue-based elections by driving local and state-level conversations on issues relating to agriculture, most especially smallholder farmers in the State.
- Facilitate the setting of development agenda priorities for political office seekers in Kebbi State that will serve as basis for post-election advocacy in demand of fulfillment of their promises.
- Raise awareness among the general public, the media, the middle/upper class about the importance of smallholder farmers in the Nigeria Project, and why their needs must be factored in to development agenda at the State and Local Government levels in Kebbi State.

In line with WANEP's operating principles of inclusivity and local ownership of initiatives in all her projects, the sensitization workshop and advocacy visits were conducted in Hausa language with the project materials (Farmers Manifesto) translated in Hausa and disseminated, all in a bid to ensure that participants in the rural areas participate effectively at the event. The activities carried out include; **Sensitization Workshop on the Farmers Manifesto; Advocacy Visits to the Kebbi State House of Assembly, Road Walk/Rally and Courtesy visits to the Kebbi Television Station.**

CAPACITY BUILDING ON FARMERS MANIFESTO:

As part of the introductory remarks to commence the sensitization workshop, WANEP, OXFAM's Coordinator, Mr. Olumide and a representative of the Kebbi Community Action made their welcome addressing, laying emphasis on the relevance of the sensitization workshop that is aimed at ensuring that the concerns of small scale farmers are a priority in the agenda of key political stakeholders in the State ahead of the 2019 general election in the country.

The Farmer Manifesto, which was presented by Muhammad Mustafa Lugga, stimulated discussions among farmers around issues of access to credits and timeliness in delivery of farm inputs. Farmers however indicated less involvement in the decision-making processes relating to Agriculture. Participants further stressed the need for improved commitment by the State Government in conducting needs assessment across communities before delivery of farm inputs, so as to ensure better impact of its support.

As a show of commitment to vote for choice political aspirants, participants publicly declared their permanent voters card (PVC) as a power tool to vote in candidates who pledge to support and improve the agricultural sector in Kebbi State. Alhaji Abba Bello Muhammad, a Political Aspirant who won the Primary election for the House of Representative for Birnin Gwari, Kalgo, Bunza Federal Constituency in the State signed the manifesto, committing to effect the content of the Farmers Manifesto when he gets into Office in 2019.



Fig 1: Alhaji Abba Bello Muhammad endorse and signs the Farmers Manifesto

Below are some of the concerns raised at the Sensitization Workshop;

- Proximity of rural small-scale farmers to access farm inputs is relevant, as hard-to-reach farming communities are mostly unable to access these agricultural benefits/support from the

State Government.

- Increase the number of extension workers (male and female) to access rural communities. This is relevant, as some rural communities still depend on old methods of farming thus resulting in poor agricultural yield.

- Provision and training of small-scale farmers on farm machineries/equipment's is essential, as it makes farming less intensive with improved harvest.

In furtherance to the awareness creation on the Farmers Manifesto, participants led by WANEP and Kebbi Community Action paid a courtesy visits to the State House of Assembly to present the Manifesto for endorsement and subsequent legislation into law.







EXPERIENCE OUTCOMES TV (in the middle) presented the State the Farmers' Manifesto and made an appeal for young people to take up agriculture as a career choice.