
Report on State Level Support to SWOFON Engagement in SPARK 2 Focal States

Background

In January 2024, the International Budget Partnership (IBP) contracted Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) to provide technical and hands-on support to SWOFON to engage in systems change in Agriculture across its 5 focal states (Anambra, Jigawa, Nasarawa, Niger, and Oyo). The project is anchored on 2 broad areas, one of which is '*to engage the agriculture budgeting process to achieve results listed in high level policies and laws*'. Between April and June 2024, CSJ facilitated post-2024 budget pullout to aid SWOFON in tracking and monitoring of selected projects and programs that are relevant to its members specifically, and women in Agriculture generally. CSJ facilitated capacity enhancement training on budget and budget process engagements for SWOFON. It also leveraged states agricultural policies, programs and SWOFON charter of demand to produce shadow Agriculture Sector Medium Term Sector Strategy (MTSS) document for each of the focal states. This document was designed as a SWOFON resource tool for engaging critical government and other relevant stakeholders in their states in the medium-term planning for the agriculture sector which informed the states' 2025 budget.

Subsequently, CSJ was further contracted to provide state-level support to SWOFON as they continued to engage government towards influencing the 2025 budget preparation. CSJ collaborated with SWOFON in providing state-specific support to SWOFON state chapters' engagement in the 5 SPARK 2 focal states. The activity was jointly delivered in collaboration with the SWOFON Secretariat. The CSJ program manager leveraged the bi-weekly SWOFON Program management team virtual engagement, including calls to provide mentorship and guidance to SWOFON state teams/ State Budget Advocacy Group (SBAG) members and they provided updates on their engagement process. The schedule for the delivery of the stakeholder engagement is as presented in the Table below:

Date	State	Venue
9 th - 10 th December, 2024	Oyo State	KOLTOTEL, Agodo GRA, Ibadan
9 th – 10 th January, 2025	Niger State	Princess AZ- Zahra Hotel, Minna
14 th – 15 th January, 2025	Anambra State	Hilton Leisure Hotel, Awka
22 nd – 23 rd January, 2025	Jigawa State	M-Town Hotel, Dutse
29 th – 30 th January, 2025	Nasarawa State	AWA Diamond Hotel, Lafia

Objectives

The SWOFON Stakeholder Consultation Meeting was facilitated in the 5 focal States with the following objectives

1. To better understand how systems have evolved following the engagement of SWOFON at state level.
2. To identify opportunities, prospects and challenges to an agricultural system that is responsive to the needs of smallholder women farmers in the state.

Summary of Proceedings

The meetings were well attended by key and relevant government institutions, SWOFON and other stakeholders from the Civil Society. Two presentations were made; the first was on the

SPARK 2 strategy including the goal and targets. The second presentation titled 'Engaging for systems change in the Agricultural Sector' featured strategic engagements, capacity development and mentoring sessions targeted at empowering SWOFON towards achieving set targets, specifically, attaining systems that are responsive to the needs of smallholder women farmers. The consultative forum also featured review of states' 2025 budgets proposals for Agriculture, and a 5-year trend to measure level of progress over time. This provided the basis and talking points for extensive and robust discussion sessions over the 2-day across the states. Discussions provided valuable insights on the workings of states' systems. There were suggestions and recommendations. Group assignments were leveraged to elicit further information on available opportunities/ windows for a more effective engagement, the prospects as well as challenges that impede on SWOFON's effectiveness in getting desired results.

The following opportunities, prospects and challenges were identified:

Oyo State

Opportunities for SHWFs (Group used the S.W.O.T. format)

- The Oyo State Ministry of Agriculture budget review forum. It was held in 2024 and SWOFON was invited and they made a presentation. However, it is not an annual event and the interval is not specified.
- The state has a farm calendar.
- The state has at least 9 big dams which can be channeled to support irrigation. State government currently working towards building farm estates on the dam sites.
- The state is home to 7 research institutions.
- Large expanse of arable land and favourable weather for farming.
- There is available credit (loan) scheme for farmers in the state. Presently, the state has earmarked N1 billion through the Agricultural Credit and Cooperative Corporation of Oyo state.
- The state has a subsidized tractorisation program for farm preparation. The service is subsidized to the tune of 50% e.g. for 2 acres of land, the farmer pays for 1 acre. The maximum limit is 20 acres per farmer.
- It has a free agricultural input palliative being implemented in collaboration with the Federal Government.
- Budget defense at the State House of Assembly level through support of the Parliamentary Liaison Officer (CSO).

Challenges

- Weak political will and interferences sometime pose bottlenecks.
- Lack of sincerity on the part of farmers - non-payback of previously collected loans proves a stumbling block to accessing credit.
- Stringent conditions for accessing credit facilities due to non-refund/ failure of the past.
- Non membership of cooperatives thus making it difficult to access provisions.
- Diversion- non-access to provisions made for farmers by real farmers.
- Lack of trust among SHWFs thus leading to loss of opportunity (e.g. social security provision).
- Non-engagement by SWOFON.

In attendance were:

Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security; State Ministry of Agriculture; Ministry of Budget and Planning; Ministry of Women Affairs; Agriculture Development Program; Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources; Ministry of Trade Investment and Cooperative Services; Justice, Development and Peace Commission Ibadan; CSOs and FIPCON Institute of SDGs

Niger State

Opportunities

- Stakeholder Engagement Forum e.g. Agriculture Core Delivery Team (ACDT) – Min. of Agriculture (MoA)
- Annual provision of farm input/equipment - MoA
- Capacity building program for women – MoA
- Social inclusion programs for women - @ Women Affairs
- In-kind credit facility through provision of input loans @ Niger State Agricultural Mechanization Development Authority (NAMDA).
- Provision of extension staff for women farmers @ NAMDA
- Women in Agriculture (WIA) facilitates training for women on improved processing and value addition – NAMDA
- Stakeholder engagement forum – Federal Ministry of Agriculture (FMoA)
- Capacity building programs across all value chains- FMoA
- Equipment distribution to women at 50% subsidy or sometimes free – FmoA
- Advisory role to MDAs to mainstream SHWFs in sector budget – Planning Commission
- Key into the farmer Governor’s agenda to feed the whole Nigeria – SHWF/CSOs
- LG leveraging the recently acquired autonomy – SHWFs/ CSOs
- Bank of Agriculture and other related window
- Gender policy

Challenges

- Limited engagement and follow-up by SWOFON
- Capacity gap among SWOFON membership
- Poor synergy between/ among MDAs
- Non-inclusion of SWOFON in mainstream budget processes at state and LGA level
- Absence of government approved land

In Attendance were;

Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security; Niger State Ministry of Agriculture (NMoA); Niger State Ministry of Budget and Planning (NMoBP); Niger State Ministry of Women Affairs (NMoWA); Niger State Ministry of Finance (NMoF); Niger State Agricultural Development Program (NADP); Niger State Ministry of Livestock (NMoL); National Population Commission (NPC); SMEDAN; CSOs and Media

Anambra State

Opportunities/ Prospects

- LGA Agricultural Department/ LGA Agriculture Supervisor
- State Budget Forum through the Civil Society Representative
- The World Food Day – October 16th yearly
- Stakeholder budget engagement (non-sector-specific)
- Annual launch of the farming season and distribution of inputs (April yearly)
- Ongoing profiling of rice farmers for support in dry season farming
- Virtual (WhatsApp) platform for information sharing coordinated by the MoA (SWOFON is a member)
- The Community Charter of Demand (CCD) through Association of Town Unions (ASATU)
- Agriculture stakeholders in the State House of Assembly provides another engagement opportunity
- The State Government’s insistence on gender reflection to facilitate releases.

Challenges

- The Agriculture Ministry budget is gender blind

- No specific budget code that takes care of SHWFs needs
- Very little resources committed to agriculture. This could mean that it is not prioritized.

In Attendance were;

State Ministry of Agriculture; State Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning; State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development; National President of Anambra State Association of Town Unions; SMEDAN; Agricultural Development Program; SSA to the First Lady of Anambra state; Federal Ministry of Agriculture; CSOs (JDPC, SIDEC and Civil Rights Concern) and Media Houses

Jigawa State

Opportunities/ Prospects

- NG CARES (fertilizers, seeds, chemicals, poultry etc) – ADP/JARDA
- Local Government Agriculture Department – Ministry of Local Government
- Grants and training @ Women Affairs
- Annual provision of fertilizers (chemical and organic), seeds and equipment like tractors, planters, water pumps and sprayers – MoA
- Input and equipment distribution FMoA
- Sasakawa global at LGA level (seeds, chemical fertilizers and machines) – ADP/JARDA
- Harvest Plus- operating in 10 LGAs – ADP/ JARDA
- Action Aid – Training of women farmers on Agro ecology

Challenges

- Projects have limited coverage
- Limited number of women beneficiaries from programs

Nasarawa State

Opportunities/ Prospects

- Citizens budget engagement Q1 Yearly– Finance and Economic Planning
- Annual Agriculture Show (Oct/Nov yearly) – MoA
- Fishing Festival Q1 16th February – MoA
- Youth Farmers Club empowerment - MoA
- World Food Day October 16th yearly - MoA
- Food and Nutrition Empowerment Program – MoA
- Women Empowerment Programs MoWA
- International Women’s Day – 8th March – MoWA
- Poverty Eradication Day – Min. of Special Duties and Humanitarian / NGOs
- NGOs and Humanitarian days
- Collaboration (Agroecological research output) with Faculty of Agriculture in State University and College of Agriculture
- Auditor-General’s Annual report for tracking performance and progress
- Committee on review and retrieval of land headed by the Deputy Governor. The Committee has retrieved 42,000 hectares. SWOFON can engage the Committee and make case for farming land.
- Proper registration/ renewal and improved engagement by SWOFON

Challenges

- Ineffective lobbying for fund releases – Most MDAs
- Engagement as individuals instead of engaging as groups/ cooperatives
- Cultural/religious barriers do not encourage effective engagements on the part of the women farmers
- Challenges of land tenure system
- Low level awareness of available provision from government
- Inadequate engagement by government MDAs/SWOFON
- Inadequate extension workers/services

In Attendance were;

State Ministry of Agriculture; State Ministry of Finance, Budget and Planning; State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development; Nasarawa state ADP; Nasarawa State Governor's office on Humanitarian Services and NGOs; Auditor General's Office; Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources; Nasarawa State College of Agriculture, Keffi, Lafia Campus; CSOs (YMCA, ASSAPIN and Dream Makers Initiative; Media Houses (News Agency of Nigeria, FRCN, NBS, and The Voice)

Lessons Learnt

1. There is very limited knowledge of and reference to constitutional, legal and policy provisions during budget consultations across the 5 states.
2. SWOFON is recognized, strong and coordinated at state level but its other structures seem not aware of happenings at the centre.
3. Most opportunities and windows available for engaging external stakeholders are in most cases not statutory and where they are, timelines are not defined.
4. Registration with cooperatives is a pre-requisite for benefitting from government provisions across all the states. While it is common knowledge that the provisions are hardly adequate to meet the demand for them, non-membership of cooperatives or any registered group is a major reason for failure.
5. Early, continuous and persistent engagement is helpful for recognition and effective carry along by government agencies.
6. Awareness and clarity about government programs and projects is required at the states.
7. Collaboration with vibrant civil society organisations or platforms is helpful for information gathering on government programs.
8. The recently granted autonomy to Local Governments provides another window for budget engagements, especially for the women at the grassroots.
9. There is weak coordination between SWOFON at the State and at the LG and Ward levels.

Conclusion and Recommendations

SWOFON is active and engaging at state level. The level of commitment by key stakeholder groups and persons is a testament to the grounds it has covered over the years. However, there is evidence of weak coordination between SWOFON at the State and the LG and Ward structures. This can be attributed to several factors including irregularity of engagement between the structures. There is little or no institutionalized consultation mechanisms for budgeting in the states. Where there are provisions, they are neither structured nor have defined timelines. Little or no reference is made to constitutional, legal and policy provision for inclusion. Nevertheless, SWOFON identifies and engages existing institutional structures like Desk Officers, Agencies, etc., while it also leverages ad-hoc arrangements to push forward its interest. Some of these structures include pet projects by Governors' wives and other influential state and non-state actors.

The following suggestions are recommended for greater effectiveness of SWOFON engagements in the states:

1. SWOFON should engage State House of Assembly (SHoA) at committee level to foster continuity and as part of sustainability strategy for continuous engagement with the legislature.
2. Where they exist, SWOFON should leverage influential platforms (e.g. Open Government Partnership) in the state to make case its demands.
3. SWOFON should mobilize its members to register in cooperatives because most of the opportunities can be accessed through cooperatives

4. SWOFON should be supported to align its structures to facilitate seamless information sharing among its members at different locations.
5. Training on record and book-keeping will help position SWOFON members to benefit from available credit facilities.
6. Continuous refresher training, evidence generation support and mentoring will help for sustained learning and engagement.
7. Joint capacity building programs for state institutions and SWOFON will foster balanced knowledge and greater collaboration.

Annexures

Stakeholders Consultative Forum/Need Setting on Prioritization of SHWFs Key MDAs in Nasarawa State		
29 th January 2025 - Day 1		
TIME	SESSION	Responsible
9:30am – 10:00am	Registration	SWOFON Secretariat
10:00am - 10:30am	Opening Formalities: Prayers Participants’ self-introduction Ground Rules	
10:30am – 11:00am	Objective of the meeting Welcome Remarks and Goodwill messages - SWOFON - Government Representatives	Ogechi National Executive MDA Reps
11:00 - 11:30noon	Overview of SWOFON Engagements	Ogechi/Bunmi
11:30am - 12:00am	Tea Break	
12:00noon – 12:45pm	Presentation <i>Engaging for Systems Change in Agricultural & Overview of Nasarawa State 2025 Budget</i>	Sundayson
12:45pm – 1:15pm	<i>Discussion & Comments</i>	
1:15pm – 2:00pm	Group Work: Identify the Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects. of SHWFs.	
2:00pm - 3:00pm	Lunch	
3:00pm – 3:30pm	Group Presentations	Group Reps
3:30pm	Wrap Up	SWOFON
Stakeholders Consultative Forum /Need Setting on Prioritization of SHWFs Key MDAs in Nasarawa State		
30 th January 2025 - Day 2		
TIME	SESSION	FACILITATOR
9:00m – 9:30am	Registration	SWOFON Secretariat
9:30am – 10:00am	Brief Recap of Day 1	
9:30am- 10:45am	Group Presentations	Group Reps & Sundayson

	- Comments & Discussion	
10:45am – am 11:45	Identifying and Prioritising Opportunities What, How and When?	SWOFON Secretariat/ Sundayson
11:45 am -12:15pm	Tea Break	
12:15pm - 1:15pm	Identifying and Prioritising Opportunities (Cont'd) What, How and When?	SWOFON Secretariat/ Sundayson
1:15pm – 2:00pm	Next Steps & Wrap up	SWOFON Secretariat
2:00pm	Lunch & Departure	