Sarah Ogabi (53), a farmer in Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria, points to a vast plot of land where she plans to build new housing solutions. Her vision combines agricultural work with a commitment to providing shelter for her community. Credit: *Maxwell Osarenkhoe/Oxfam*

ANALYSIS OF OXFAM'S FEMALE FOOD HERO ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Agriculture engages 25% of Nigeria's population, with women comprising over half of smallholder farmers yet remaining undervalued. Oxfam's Female Food Hero (FFH) Initiative, launched in 2012, empowers women through recognition, training in sustainable agriculture, business, leadership, and advocacy, and by linking them to markets and policymaking platforms. This qualitative case study, using key informant interviews and SWOT analysis, found significant gains in participation, leadership, and economic opportunities. However, poor reporting, limited funding, and inadequate staffing constrain impact. Recommendations include increased resources, dedicated staff, improved communication, accessible applications, and robust monitoring and evaluation to strengthen the initiative's sustainability and reach.

Acronyms

CSO	Civil society organization
FFH	Female Food Hero
GDP	Gross domestic product
INGO	International nongovernmental organization
LNGO	Local nongovernmental organization
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation, and learning
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
KII	Key informant interview
SWOT	Strength, weakness, opportunity, threat (analysis)
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
YSDA	Youths for Sustainable Development Action
CAC	Corporate Affairs Commission

Executive Summary

Introduction

Agriculture is a cornerstone of Nigeria's economy, engaging about 25 percent of the population and contributing significantly to the gross domestic product (GDP). Women, who represent over half of Nigeria's smallholder farmers, are integral to the agricultural landscape but their contributions are often undervalued and unsupported. Launched in 2012, the female food hero (FFH) Initiative seeks to empower women farmers through recognition, capacity building, and advocacy, thereby enhancing their visibility and influence in agriculture through training in sustainable farming practices, business management, and leadership, alongside facilitating networks that connect women to markets and policymaking platforms.

Methodology

The methodology employed for evaluating the Oxfam FFH Initiative was rooted in a qualitative case study approach, leveraging key informant interviews (KIIs) to gather in-depth insights from a diverse group of stakeholders, including Oxfam staff, partners, government officials, and the women farmers themselves. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, ensuring a rich, comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perspectives of all participants, which informed the strategic recommendations and improvements proposed for the FFH Initiative. This approach was complemented by a strength, weakness, opportunity, threat (SWOT) analysis to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to the initiative.

Findings: successes and challenges

So far, the FFH Initiative has significantly empowered women farmers in Nigeria by enhancing their participation, leadership, economic opportunities, skills, networking, visibility, and advocacy, while promoting sustainable agricultural practices. Despite the initiative's positive impact, three fundamental issues of poor reporting, insufficient funding, and lack of specialized staffing have hindered its effectiveness and sustainability. The program has historically relied on a singular program manager and nonspecialist volunteers, which has proven inadequate for the scope of the initiative's ambitions.

Strategic recommendations

- *Increased funding:* This is essential for extending the initiative's activities and impact, hiring dedicated staff, boosting training, and offering financial support for essential agricultural resources.

ii *Enhanced staffing:* Establish critical roles like program managers and specialists to focus on training delivery, feedback, and impact assessments.

iii *Enhanced communication between Oxfam and the Female Food Heroes:* Implement quarterly communication schedules, trainings, and community forums, to foster learning.

iv *Strengthen pre- and post-award activities:* Resume village savings and loan association (VSLA) trainings before or after awards, and broaden training and engagement efforts to include customized sessions, mentoring programs, and practical field days, catering specifically to the needs of the women farmers in different regions.

v *Modified applications process:* Make the application process more accessible via electronic forms on the Oxfam website and links shared among the women. Electronic submissions of forms would facilitate easier participation for women farmers at localized centers, as well as transparency, automated screening, cost effectiveness, and eco-friendliness.

vi *Comprehensive monitoring and evaluation:* The study recommends a detailed monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework with 10 metrics across five strategic objectives to enhance the FFH Initiative's impact and effectiveness. Metrics like participation rates, satisfaction, skill enhancement, leadership, income growth, and business expansion should be assessed through surveys, interviews, and longitudinal studies. This evaluation strategy is designed for continuous improvement, focusing on engagement, capacity building, economic impact, sustainability, and advocacy. Regular data collection, bi-annual reporting, and continuous stakeholder feedback ensure the program adapts to and meets the evolving needs of women farmers in Nigeria.

In conclusion, the FFH Initiative is well-positioned to make a significant positive impact on the lives of women farmers in Nigeria. By addressing the key issues of funding, staffing, reporting, and documentation, the initiative can enhance its operational effectiveness and ensure it meets its goals of empowering women and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. These strategic enhancements will not only support the women directly involved but also foster broader economic stability and growth within Nigeria.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Agriculture is crucial to Nigeria's economy and society, with nearly 25 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) coming from this sector and a large portion of the population relying on farming for their income (World Bank, 2023). Growth in the agricultural sector is a proven method to reduce poverty and decrease Nigeria's dependence on food imports, as experts suggest that a one percent increase in agriculture could lift millions out of poverty (Amaonwu, 2024). The National Bureau of Statistics reports that agriculture accounts for 23.78 percent of Nigeria's GDP, with women playing a significant role (Amaonwu, 2024). In Sub-Saharan Africa, about 66 percent of women are engaged in agriculture, and in Nigeria, over 52 percent of smallholder farmers are women (FAO, 2023). Women are central to food production, household management, and local market sustenance, contributing significantly to food security and economic stability (IFPRI, 2023).

Despite their vital contributions, women in agriculture face numerous challenges, including limited access to land, quality seeds, fertilizers, modern equipment, and financial resources due to discriminatory lending practices (Amaonwu, 2024; World Bank, 2023). Cultural norms and societal expectations often place women at a disadvantage, restricting their opportunities and market access, leading to lower financial returns compared to men (IFPRI, 2023). Additionally, women struggle with time constraints due to household responsibilities and face obstacles such as displacement and increased vulnerability in conflict-affected regions (Amaonwu, 2024). Nonetheless, Nigerian women display resilience and determination, remaining pivotal to the country's food security and agricultural transformation (World Bank, 2023; Amaonwu, 2024). Recognizing and empowering these women is essential for their growth and for achieving broader economic stability and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Oxfam, through its Food and Nutrition Security and Inclusive Agricultural Growth initiatives, has been working to address agricultural challenges in Nigeria and other countries. The organization implements various programs under the umbrella of the Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Livelihoods program to tackle issues such as food insecurity, poverty, and the empowerment of women in agriculture. The Female Food Heroes (FFH) Initiative is one of the initiatives aimed at supporting and empowering Nigerian women in agriculture, championed by Oxfam. The FFH Initiative was initiated in 2012 by Oxfam to recognize and celebrate small-scale women farmers as “Ogbonge Women,” the pidgin translation for FFH, which signifies a strong, industrious, and dependable woman.

Oxfam in Nigeria's "Ogbonge Women" is part of the global Oxfam Female Food Hero Initiative that is active in Africa in Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Tanzania. Outside of Africa, the Female Food Hero Initiative has also been adapted by Oxfam and partner teams in countries like Armenia, Georgia, Indonesia, and Russia.

The FFH Initiative was initiated in 2012 by Oxfam to recognize and celebrate small-scale women farmers as "Ogbonge Women," the pidgin translation for FFH, which signifies a strong, industrious, and dependable woman.

Oxfam's FFH Initiative in Nigeria aims to tackle agricultural challenges holistically, addressing the root causes of food insecurity and poverty while empowering smallholder farmers, particularly women, to achieve sustainable livelihoods. Through partnerships and collaborations with local organizations and government agencies, Oxfam seeks to create long-term, systemic change in Nigeria's agricultural sector. The FFH Initiative in Nigeria has been instrumental in shedding light on the often-overlooked efforts of Nigerian women in agriculture. Through this program, Oxfam has provided a platform for women farmers, to amplify their voices and advocate for their rights. Over the years, the FFH Initiative has not only raised awareness about the challenges faced by women small-scale farmers but has also empowered them with leadership skills to influence policies that directly impact their lives and livelihoods.

Oxfam's engagement strategy in the FFH Initiative has focused on elevating the role and contributions of women to food security in Nigeria. Through targeted radio and TV programs, Oxfam has been successful in raising the visibility and recognition of female farmers, allowing them to emerge as influential role models in their communities. This increased visibility has inspired others to view farming as a viable and empowering career path. Oxfam's FFH Initiative attempts to provide tangible benefits to women by offering training in sustainable farming practices, business management, and leadership skills. These opportunities have led to improved incomes for many women and enhanced their capacity to advocate for their rights. Furthermore, the initiative fosters a strong network of support by facilitating connections among female food heroes, allowing them to share experiences and knowledge. Oxfam also integrates women farmers into national and international awards and advocacy efforts, providing them with platforms to amplify their voices and influence policy. Overall, the FFH Initiative has had a significant impact on empowering women in agriculture and advancing their role in achieving food security in Nigeria.

However, despite these achievements, there have been recent indications of a decline in engagement between Oxfam and the Ogbonge Women. While the initiative initially fostered strong partnerships and collaborations, there appears to have been a decline in the engagement, and some of the women have had to engage more with other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) locally to meet their agricultural capacity-building needs. This trend raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of the FFH Initiative.

Against this backdrop, there arose a pressing need to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the FFH engagement strategy. By delving into the challenges and opportunities associated with Oxfam's engagement with the Ogbonge Women, this analysis aims to identify strategies for revitalizing and strengthening the engagement process. Ultimately, the goal is to ascertain how best Oxfam's internal processes and systems can be most effective for engaging with the Ogbonge Women in a way that contributes to the long-term sustainability of the initiative.

1.2 Project objectives

The FFH engagement analysis research project seeks to review, identify, analyze, and document the strategies, systems, processes, lessons learned, and experiences related to Oxfam's engagement with the Ogbonge Women in the FFH Initiative. The goal is to provide actionable insights to improve the sustainability of engagement efforts and strengthen partnerships between Oxfam and female farmers.

The central objectives of this study include to:

1. assess the extent to which Oxfam's engagement strategies contributed to or failed to contribute to the long-term sustainability of the FFH Initiative and Oxfam's ability to engage with the women sustainably;
2. examine the role of Oxfam's internal systems and processes in contributing to the sustainable engagement of Ogbonge Women in the FFH Initiative.

1.3 Scope of evaluation

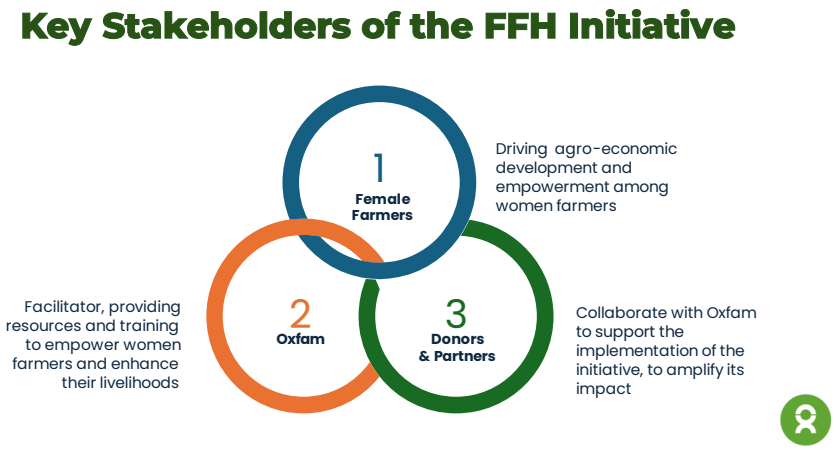
The analysis detailed in this report delves exclusively into the experiences and challenges faced by women farmers in Nigeria, under the auspices of Oxfam's FFH Initiative. This focus is pivotal given the critical role these farmers play in the agricultural sector and their potential for driving economic and social change in their communities. The findings and recommendations derived from this report are tailored to serve the needs and interests of three key stakeholder groups, each of which interacts with the FFH Initiative in distinct ways:

1. **Female farmers**: The insights gleaned from this report are of immense value to the female farmers who are directly involved in the FFH Initiative. By articulating their experiences and the challenges they face, the report facilitates a platform where these women can share lessons learned and voice their needs and suggestions more effectively. This, in turn, will empower them to influence the design and implementation of future initiatives. Furthermore, by highlighting their stories and the successes of the FFH Initiative, the report helps strengthen their partnerships with NGOs, fostering a supportive network that enhances their productivity and sustainability. The sharing of these insights and experiences not only serves to inform program adjustments but also bolsters the community of female farmers, equipping them with knowledge that can lead to greater empowerment and advocacy within and beyond their immediate environments.
2. **Oxfam staff**: For Oxfam staff, the report offers a comprehensive overview of the current engagement strategies and their outcomes, providing critical feedback on areas that require improvement. The recommendations made will guide Oxfam staff in refining their approach to working with women's organizations not just in Nigeria but globally. The insights will help address internal challenges that affect collaboration, such as communication gaps, resource allocation, and strategy implementation. By implementing

these recommendations, Oxfam can enhance its operational efficiency and effectiveness in women-centric programs, ultimately leading to more robust and impactful collaborations.

3. **Donors**: Donors play a crucial role in enabling the continuation and expansion of initiatives like FFH. The findings from this report serve as a vital tool for Oxfam in its donor engagement and fundraising efforts. By showcasing the effective strategies and significant outcomes of the initiative, particularly how it amplifies women's voices and fosters strong partnerships with women's organizations, the report helps build a compelling case for the value and impact of donor investments. This evidence can attract additional funding by demonstrating the tangible benefits that targeted support for women farmers can achieve. Moreover, donors looking for accountability and effective use of funds will find the detailed analysis and positive outcomes reassuring, potentially leading to sustained or increased support for Oxfam's initiatives. See Figure 1 delineating the key stakeholders of the FFH Initiative.

Figure 1: Key stakeholders of the FFH Initiative



2 Research Methods

2.1 Research design

The aim of this research was to develop a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in engaging the Ogbonge Women in the FFH Initiative in Nigeria. The engagement strategy analysis adopted a case study methodology with a qualitative approach, wherein data collected from the field was analyzed and triangulated with information obtained from the desk review of FFH Initiative reports, project proposals, and internal Oxfam monitoring information.

2.2 Population and sample

The population of this study comprises all stakeholders of Oxfam's FFH Initiative. These include:

i. the Ogbonge Women who had been selected finalists and had engagements with Oxfam

ii. Oxfam staff on the FFH project

iii. partners to Oxfam such as local nongovernmental organizations (LNGOs) that engaged with the women on behalf of Oxfam

Purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were used to select respondents for the study. In terms of sample size, there was no restriction from the start as the semi-structured interviews were continuously conducted to the point of saturation, which is the point at which no new issues emerge from the interviews (Trotter, 2012; Saunders and Townsend, 2016). The study interviewed 14 participants all together until there were no new issues coming up in the interviews.

2.3 Stakeholder consultations and data collection

In the process of study, comprehensive stakeholder consultations were integral to gaining a deep understanding of the current landscape and the effectiveness of Oxfam's engagement strategies. To this end, we undertook a systematic approach in collaboration with the project manager for the study to identify and engage a broad spectrum of key stakeholders. These included female farmers at the heart of the initiative, Oxfam staff and partners who are instrumental in its execution, government officials whose policies affect agricultural practices, donors who support the program financially, and other relevant organizations that contribute to or impact the agricultural sector.

Due to time and access constraints of the research, the qualitative approach relied on the content of semi-structured key informant interviews

(KIIs) with the Ogbonge Women and other FFH stakeholders. Semi-structured KIIs were selected as they allowed for flexibility in exploring participants' perspectives. The Ogbonge Women interview participants were selected from the FFH database of national members who were previous finalists and are leaders of female farmers groups in their regions. All the participants were from different states to provide some diversity of perspectives that would indicate the general opinions of female farmers across different states or regions in the country. All previous Ogbonge Women leaders from their national group were contacted, but only those who responded and were willing and able to participate in the research were interviewed.

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to facilitate discussions around key research questions (See Appendix C). The guide was to explore participants' experiences in engaging with the FFH Ogbonge Women Initiative in Nigeria. The data collection involved conducting the one-on-one semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2013) via video conferencing, due to the preferences of the participants and logistical feasibility resulting from the short timeline of the project. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent to capture detailed responses and ensure accuracy in data analysis.

Participants were selected based on their direct involvement with the FFH Initiative, ensuring a diverse representation of views and experiences. This included a mix of Oxfam staff responsible for managing the program, partners who facilitated the implementation across various communities, and the women farmers who are the primary FFH participants of the initiative. Selection aimed to cover a broad spectrum of roles to gather comprehensive insights into the FFH Initiative's functioning and impact. See Table 1.

Table 1: Abridged profile of interview participants

Participants	Role
1	Ogbonge Woman (FFH Participant) 01
2	Ogbonge Woman (FFH Participant) 02
3	Ogbonge Woman (FFH Participant) 03
4	Ogbonge Woman (FFH Participant) 04
5	Ogbonge Woman (FFH Participant) 05
6	Ogbonge Woman (FFH Participant) 06
7	LNGO Partner 01
8	LNGO Partner 02
9	Partner at Oxfam International
10	Staff at Oxfam Nigeria
11	Staff at Oxfam Nigeria, Finance
12	Staff at Oxfam, FFH Project Manager
13	Staff at Oxfam Nigeria
14	

Source: the present study

The engagement with these diverse stakeholders provides a well-rounded perspective on the initiative, highlighting successes and areas for improvement from multiple viewpoints. This methodological approach ensures that the analysis encompasses a broad range of experiences, reflecting the complexity and multifaceted nature of the

FFH Initiative.

2.4 Data analysis

The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and reflexive thematic analysis technique was used to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights across participants' responses (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Byrne, 2022). For the qualitative analysis, the interview data was analyzed in Nvivo software. The report triangulated findings from different data sources such as the desk review and interviews to validate results and ensure reliability and validity of the evaluation findings.

2.5 Research ethics and quality assurance

Ensuring the credibility of the research result is of utmost importance to this study. Ethical considerations (Saunders, 2015) were prioritized throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw at any stage (See Appendix A). Informed consent (Appendix B) was obtained from all participants prior to conducting interviews.

To ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of this study, member checking techniques were employed. Member checking involves sharing key findings with participants to confirm accuracy and interpretation of their contributions. Limitations of this study may include potential participant bias and the subjective nature of qualitative research. Efforts were made to mitigate bias through transparent and reflexive data collection and analysis practices (Byrne, 2022).

3 Results and discussion

3.1 Purpose of FFH Initiative

The Female Food Heroes (FFH) Initiative is a transformative program designed to recognize, celebrate, and empower women farmers who are pivotal in securing food sustainability and enhancing community development through agriculture. The FFH Initiative, launched by Oxfam in Nigeria, aims to promote equity and increase opportunities for women farmers by focusing on several key outcomes. Table 2 below presents a summary of the key findings from the study.

Table 2: Key Results

Topic	Details
Oxfam's strategies in the FFH Initiative	The initiative focuses on capacity building and leadership development. Processes include applications, screening, and selection of candidates on merit through a streamlined process. Introduction of village savings and loan (VSL) and association of small-scale farmers in Nigeria. VSL training has enabled women to save and invest in their businesses, leading to financial growth and sustainability. Strategies include media engagement, public campaigns, grants, and training on value chains. Linking women with policymakers and global spaces for advocacy and leadership skills. Evolution of the FFH Initiative has led to increased participation and empowerment of women farmers. Women are encouraged to be self-sufficient and contribute to family income. Women now engage in meetings to enhance their skills and knowledge.
Collaborations	Collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and local CSOs is crucial. Involvement of INGOs and private sector actors for additional support and training. Seeking sponsors and engaging high-level government officials for project visibility. Engagement with organizations like Agra, Action Aid, and International Labour Organization (ILO) has provided raw materials, training, and advocacy opportunities. Collaborations have focused on entrepreneurship, policy drafting, and budget tracking for women farmers. Collaboration involves project risk assessment management and evaluation of partner capabilities. Criteria for full partnership include registration, financial

Topic	Details
	policies, and audit practices. Importance of conducting "know your partner" tests for effective collaboration.
Feedback mechanisms	Feedback collection through field officers, reports, and direct communication with women farmers. Use of annual/program review meetings to gather feedback and assess program effectiveness. Need for better organization, communication, and exposure to opportunities for continuous improvement.
Impact of participation in Oxfam's FFH Initiative	Evolution of the FFH Initiative has led to increased participation and empowerment of women farmers. Introduction of village savings and loan (VSL) and association of small-scale farmers in Nigeria. Women are encouraged to be self-sufficient and contribute to family income. Participation in the FFH Initiative has led to exposure, training, and networking opportunities for women farmers. Winners have used their awards to invest in their businesses and acquire assets like smoking machines used in drying fresh fish and land. Travel opportunities and engagement with other organizations have expanded their knowledge and experiences. Oxfam's training methods and capacity-building approaches have influenced women farmers to save, invest, and train others. Exposure to new technologies and business practices has enhanced farming practices and livelihoods. Participation in the FFH Initiative has improved communication skills, provided travel opportunities, and elevated community standing. Women farmers have been able to provide nutritious food, share experiences, and encourage others in their communities.
Challenges	Lack of continued engagement and sustainability on Oxfam's end is a major challenge. Internal staffing issues and insufficient funding are obstacles. Monitoring and alumni platforms are needed for continuous support. On the Ogbonge Women's side, challenges include gaps in engagement, lack of follow-up, and communication issues with Oxfam. Women farmers face obstacles like busy schedules, economic impacts, and lack of support during crises. Efforts to overcome challenges through continued

Topic	Details
	community engagement and support. Lessons learned include the need for improved communication and crisis management.
Hopes and expectations	Expectations include continued support, financial assistance, and advocacy for women farmers' rights and interests. Calls for expanded training, technology access, and marketable product packaging to enhance women farmers' capabilities.
Suggestions for improvement of FFH	Media briefings, advocacy visits, detailed lists of women farmers. Increase winners from various states. Increased direct funding and support. Better monitoring, collaboration with partners. Focus on providing land ownership opportunities to women farmers for economic independence. Emphasis on more training programs like VSLA to empower women and reduce dependency on husbands. Addressing issues like kidnapping, rape on farms, and gender-based violence, and improve advocacy efforts.

Source: Oxfam Field Survey, 2024

The primary objectives of FHH include:

1. **Engagement with public officials and opinion leaders**: The initiative seeks to engage public officials and opinion leaders to highlight the need for equity and increased opportunities for women farmers. By drawing attention to the unique challenges and contributions of women in agriculture, FFH aims to influence policies and public perceptions in favor of gender equity in farming.

"Public officials and opinion-leaders engaged on need to promote equity and increased opportunity for women farmers." – Desk Review (FFH MEL Plan, 2014)

2. **Leadership development**: FFH is designed to build the leadership capacity of women farmers. It is not merely about recognizing their farming skills but also about empowering them to become leaders within their families and communities. The initiative provides women with the platform and knowledge to enhance their leadership skills, boosting their confidence and enabling them to engage at higher levels.

"The intention for these women is not just for them to come to Abuja and get awards. It is also a means of building their capacity and expose them to higher knowledge and platform where they can engage and become their own leaders. It is about leadership as well,

not just about farming alone. How they can have improved knowledge and have access to improved facilities and be able to engage at top levels developing their own confidence and leadership skills." – Project coordinator at Oxfam 01

"Women gain more leadership positions in their families and communities." – Desk Review (FFH MEL Plan, 2014)

"Oxfam in Nigeria ... launched FFH to build leadership capacity for women." – An Oxfam Nigeria partner

3. **Increased productivity**: By participating in FFH contests and events, women farmers receive recognition and support that can lead to increased productivity on their farms. The initiative aims to equip women with better knowledge and access to improved agricultural facilities and techniques.

"Women's farms are more productive." – Desk Review (FFH MEL Plan, 2014)

4. **Public and media attention**: The FFH contests and events help women farmers gain public and media attention for their needs and concerns. This visibility can attract support and resources from various stakeholders, including policymakers, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector.

"Through implementation of FFH contests and events, women farmers gain public and media attention to their needs and concerns." – Desk Review (FFH MEL Plan, 2014)

5. **Youth engagement and respect for farming**: FFH engages young audiences and fosters increased respect for farming and women farmers. By showcasing the success and leadership of women in agriculture, the initiative aims to inspire young people to value and pursue careers in farming.

"Young audiences engaged and develop increased respect for farming and women farmers in particular." – Desk Review (FFH MEL Plan, 2014)

Overall, the purpose of the FFH Initiative is to create a supportive and empowering environment for women farmers, enabling them to improve their agricultural practices, assume leadership roles, and advocate for their rights and needs within the broader community.

3.2 Process of the FFH Initiative

This initiative reflects a comprehensive process that involves multiple stages—from nomination and training to the award ceremony and beyond—each designed to build capacity, recognize efforts, and inspire further achievements in agricultural practices among women. Specifically, the five stages involved in the FFH Initiative are briefly explained as follows.

Stage 1: Nomination and application

The FFH Initiative begins with a broad call for nominations. This stage is critical as it opens up opportunities for communities to acknowledge the hardworking women who have made significant contributions to agriculture. The nomination process is facilitated through two channels:

i **Design and distribution of forms**: Nomination forms are designed by Oxfam and disseminated through partner organizations, which include local NGOs, governmental bodies such as the Ministry of Agriculture, and other stakeholders involved in agricultural development. Oxfam does not dictate how partners select nominees or distribute the forms.

ii **Submission and screening**: Women farmers across the region submit their applications, which are then meticulously screened by a dedicated committee. This committee evaluates the applications based on a rigorous set of criteria designed to assess each candidate's impact on food production, innovative practices, and contributions to community resilience.

The FFH Report (2014) for Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Nigeria stated that:

> *"In Nigeria, a stakeholders meeting introduced and discussed the concept and one-to-one meetings resulted amongst others in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development assigning a federal desk and desk officer to coordinate the FFH nominations across 24 states covering all six geographical zones."*

The FFH project manager at Oxfam Nigeria added that:

> *"For the selection process, we design forms for women to send in entries, the forms are sent to all states through our partners, these women fill the forms and submit them to the partners per state. The next step is to hire volunteers who will in turn sort out the forms according to the states and score them per the scoring criteria given to them. Once they are done with the scoring process, we move the selected forms to the judges who will in turn use same scoring criteria to select the best 12."*

These views are supported by responses from the three other staff at Oxfam who were interviewed. A finance coordinator at Oxfam added that project and partner risk assessments are conducted to ensure the partners are competent to deliver their roles to Oxfam:

> *"There's what we call project risk assessment management that is conducted every year, that is what we use to assess the partners. It depends on what the partner wants to do, and we look at the capability of the partner. We have a checklist for full partnership, e.g., if they are registered with Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), their structure, their finance policy in managing big funds, have they audited their accounts before, do they have safeguarding policy etc. We conduct a know your partner (KYP) test on the partners."*

Stage 2: Pre-award activities

After the initial screening, selected finalists undergo a series of pre-award activities aimed at preparing them for the final event and enhancing their skills:

i **Vetting finalists**: A deeper evaluation of the finalists is conducted by Oxfam to verify the information provided in their applications and to understand their actual impact on the ground. This may involve site visits, interviews, and detailed assessments of their farming operations.

ii **Capacity building and training**: Finalists receive specialized training sessions tailored to their specific needs. These sessions cover modern agricultural techniques, business management, financial literacy, and other skills essential for scaling their operations and increasing their market reach. This phase is crucial for empowering the women with the knowledge and tools they need to succeed beyond the competition.

iii **Awareness campaigns**: Various activities, including walks, public forums, and media engagements, are organized to sensitize the community and policymakers about the importance of supporting and investing in female farmers. These campaigns also serve to highlight the achievements of the finalists, showcasing their contributions to food security and sustainable practices. For example, the FFH report (2022) stated that Walk and Sensitization activities were conducted from Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to Unity Fountain in Abuja to kick-start the World Food Day week and create awareness on the importance of celebrating and noticing the system in place used to feed humanity and the need for more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive food systems in Nigeria.

An Oxfam staff who is a project manager outside the FFH but working with the FFH was interviewed, and sums up this stage as follows:

> *"The best are invited for the final selection process where they go through trainings because at this point, they are already winners. This last stage involves physical/oral interview to get to know them better and score them. This is based on farming experience they have. We score them and select the best person among them to be crowned for that year."*

Another Oxfam staff, a finance coordinator, adds:

> *"I work with Oxfam as a finance coordinator. We work with VSLA (Village Savings and Loan Associations). …Once the selection process is conducted, the best 12 are selected, these women will then be trained on VSLA. Whoever does well with their business afterward will be crowned as the hero."*

These statements are confirmed by all the women who participated in the FFH and took part in this study. They confirmed that they got their application forms from the Ministry of Agriculture and other LNGOs like Youths for Sustainable Development Action (YSDA). They filled out the forms and were invited for the competition, which had to do with

answering questions and carrying out certain tasks in a home in the manner of a live contest. They were evaluated based on their participation and responses. For instance:

"I was in my cottage farm when Ministry of Agriculture called me to fill the FFH form. I was selected as one of the 12 finalists and the competition held in Lagos." – Ogbonge Woman 01

"In 2014, I was in Kaduna and an NGO called YSDA gave me the form to apply for Oxfam's program. I was picked out of 112 applicants and called to Lagos. We did a lot of activities there, like exercises, singing, and cooking, and we were evaluated." – Ogbonge Woman 02

"I got the form through the Ministry of Agriculture, specifically from the Department of Women Mobilization and Rural Development. I'm not sure about the detailed screening process, but I do know that they asked questions about climate change and what we would do for humanity. Our responses and confidence were key factors in their evaluation." – Ogbonge Woman 03

"Oxfam visited my factory to inspect and ascertain that what I claimed to be doing was real, and I received the prize that came with the win." – Ogbonge Woman 04

"I got a form from the Ministry of Agriculture. After being interviewed and having my farm visited, I was selected as a finalist and attended the event in Ikeja, Lagos. The competition was like a live reality show with participation and Q&A sessions."- Ogbonge Woman 05

"I participated in a program in Lagos, organized by the Ministry of Agriculture, which is where my journey with Oxfam began. I got the application form from a colleague, filled it out, and was later called by Oxfam to join their program in Lagos." – Ogbonge Woman 06

Reports from 2022 highlight some pre-award activities like the five-day application screening and awareness walks. However, critical aspects such as Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) training, vital for financial empowerment, were notably absent both before and after the award ceremony. This gap represents a missed opportunity to enhance participants' financial literacy and economic resilience. Moreover, there appears to be a reduction in partnership diversity compared to previous years, which could limit the initiative's reach and impact. For instance, the 2014 report says in addition to the NGOs involved, 19 private sector organizations co-sponsored FFH events in Nigeria, while in the 2022 report, there was no mention of co-sponsors other than the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Stage 3: Award ceremony

The climax of the FFH Initiative is the award ceremony, a high-profile event that celebrates the achievements of the finalists:

- **Presentations and judging**: During the ceremony, finalists present their agricultural projects and the innovations they have introduced. A panel of judges, consisting of experts

in agriculture, business, and community development, assesses these presentations based on predefined criteria.

ii **Recognition and prizes**: Winners are announced at the ceremony, receiving prizes that significantly contribute to the advancement of their agricultural activities. These prizes often include essential farm inputs, tools, and sometimes monetary awards, all designed to support the winners in expanding their agricultural endeavors.

Stage 4: Post-award support

According to this study's Desk Review, the support for winners does not end with the award ceremony. Post-award initiatives are designed to ensure continuous development and community integration:

i **Continued training and mentorship**: Winners may receive ongoing mentorship from agricultural experts and business coaches to help them apply their new skills and expand their operations.

ii **Networking opportunities**: Engagements in various forums, including agricultural fairs and conferences, enable the winners to connect with larger markets and potential investors, further enhancing their economic opportunities.

iii **Media coverage**: Extensive media coverage, including features in newspapers, interviews on radio and television, and posts on social media, helps raise awareness about the contributions of women to agriculture.

iv **Advocacy for policy change**: By showcasing the successes and challenges of the female food heroes, the initiative advocates for policy changes that support women farmers more broadly, such as improved access to land and financial services.

Concerns arise in the post-award phase, where the effectiveness of support activities has been notably inadequate. Unlike the comprehensive media coverage and engagement reported in 2014 across various platforms, including TV stations and radio channels (Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), We, Wazobia, Radio Nigeria, Cool FM, Rhythm FM, Beat FM, News Agency of Nigeria, Voice of Nigeria, TVContinental, AIT African Independent Television Nigeria, Rhythm FM plateau, Von Benue State, FCT, Wazobia FCT, Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and TV), the 2022 report lacks evidence of similar visibility and outreach. This decline in media presence could diminish the initiative's impact and limit its ability to inspire broader societal change, reflecting a lapse in post-award support activities.

Stage 5: Monitoring and evaluation

The existing feedback mechanism according to available records in the FFH MEL plan (2014) and Oxfam Project Agreement (OPA) (2021) indicate that the FFH project is supposed to have quarterly narrative reports and annual narrative and financial reports using the donor guidelines. However, these are largely absent as only annual reports for 2014 and 2022 editions were accessible to this study for desk review. Additionally,

there was no standardized reporting structure observed in line with the prescribed donor guidelines as captured in the OPA (2021). These indicate a gap in reporting or documentation of approved reports for future reference and use.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation are crucial to assess the effectiveness of the FFH Initiative and to continuously improve its impact. Regular follow-ups with past winners help gauge the long-term impact of the initiative on their lives and on their communities. This data is vital for understanding the real-world effects of the program and for reporting to stakeholders and donors. Establishing robust feedback channels ensures that participants can share their experiences and suggestions for improving the program. This feedback is invaluable for making the FFH Initiative more responsive to the needs of women farmers.

3.3 Successes of the FFH Initiative in Nigeria

The Female Food Heroes (FFH) Initiative by Oxfam has undergone significant evolution, transitioning from foundational agricultural training to a comprehensive empowerment and advocacy platform for women farmers. This transformation is evident in the strategic shift from basic capacity building to encompassing empowerment initiatives. These include VSLA and financial literacy training, leadership capacity building, networking, and advocacy.

The FFH Initiative has particularly had a profound impact on women farmers in Nigeria, through the Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) trainings. This initiative has been pivotal in empowering women, encouraging financial independence, and fostering community development. The VSLA training has played a crucial role in transforming the financial independence of women in various Nigerian states. An Oxfam financial coordinator in charge of the VSLA training highlighted-

> *"From the VSLA they know what is at stake, and it has encouraged other women to be involved. They no longer depend on their husband's income but instead they contribute to the family affair."*

The training has enabled women to leverage their resources effectively, leading to significant economic improvements. For instance, in states where women traditionally did not own land, the training has empowered them to acquire land independently, reducing reliance on their husbands for household management. Ogbonge Woman 02 confirmed the success of these initiatives in Kaduna:

> *"In Kaduna, VSL is working well; everyone repays their loans."*

This indicates a high level of financial responsibility and community trust fostered by the VSLA programs.

Ogbonge Woman 01's experience in Lagos further exemplifies the program's success:

> *"Fourteen of us were invited and trained on village savings and loan*

"From the VSLA they know what is at stake, and it has encouraged other women to be involved. They no longer depend on their husband's income but instead they contribute to the family affair."

-Oxfam financial coordinator

(VSL). ... I returned to Lagos and trained about 25 women on VSL. These women were given a loan of 10,000 naira each to start a business."

The ripple effect of this training is evident, with 17 groups now comprising over 500 women who initially received small loans and now save significantly from their businesses.

"The women that started with a 10,000-naira loan now save about 40,000 naira monthly from their businesses. Women now believe that as farmers we can save money (VSL); everyone is eager to save and continue building. These trainings have assisted me to train other farmers, and they are really working hard. Oxfam gave us smartphones and saving boxes to start off."

Ogbonge Woman 01's comments illustrate the transformative economic impact of the program. Ogbonge Woman 04 also benefited from the continued VSLA training, which she found immensely helpful:

"In 2016 and 2017, I was taught about the Village Savings and Loan Scheme (VSL). It really helped us, and I was the coordinator."

The implementation of VSLAs has not been without challenges. Ogbonge Woman 05 recounted initial difficulties with loan repayments in her community, but adjustments were made to address these issues:

"Initially, we faced issues with some women not repaying loans, but we changed our strategy. Now, we only lend what people have contributed, reducing the risk."

This strategic change helped stabilize the program and maintain its integrity. Ogbonge Woman 06 highlighted a different challenge related to security concerns with the VSLA program:

"The VSL became a security risk as people began to fear getting kidnapped for being involved with money matters, and I had to complain to Oxfam for advice, and the advice helped us."

This indicates Oxfam's active role in addressing and resolving issues faced by participants, ensuring the program's ongoing success. The VSLA training has also fostered a sense of collective economic action and community development. An Oxfam partner observed:

"Through the process of networking, they also began to look for and realize collective economic action."

He noted that a group of women formed a cooperative, formalizing their efforts and taking the program beyond its initial scope. This natural evolution underscores the program's impact on fostering entrepreneurship and community solidarity.

The VSLA trainings have significantly empowered women farmers across Nigeria, fostering financial independence, addressing challenges, and encouraging community development. The testimonials from participants underscore the transformative power of these programs and their far-reaching impact on the lives of women and their communities.

On the other hand, the former project manager of the FFH Initiative, who oversaw its development until 2022, commented regarding leadership capacity building's impact that:

"The FFH has evolved considering how well the women have been doing. Most of them now take the initiative to organize meetings amongst themselves and improve on themselves. In a nutshell, this is it."

This illustrates a move towards self-sufficiency and peer-led development. Coordinators of the project have observed substantial changes in the initiative's approach, which was initially centered on agricultural training but has since incorporated elements of leadership and advocacy. Another Oxfam staff, who is a project manager on a different project, elaborated on the early goals and the evolution of the program:

"In my opinion, it has been selectively good in terms of years; not all the years have been good. There were some years that the women selected were really small-scale farmers and because the intention for these women is not just for them to come to Abuja and get awards. It is also a means of building their capacity and expose them to higher knowledge and platform where they can engage and become their own leaders. It is about leadership as well, not just about farming alone. How they can have improved knowledge and have access to improved facilities and be able to engage at top levels developing their own confidence and leadership skills."

This progressive transition reflects a broader understanding within Oxfam of the multifaceted roles that women can fulfill in enhancing agricultural productivity and community development if equipped with the appropriate tools and opportunities. The shift towards empowering women through FFH not only aims to improve their agricultural skills but also to cultivate their capacities as community leaders and advocates for change.

Moreover, the initiative has emphasized creating networks of influence and support among women farmers, enabling them to advocate for their rights and develop leadership roles within their communities. A third project manager on a separate project highlighted the innovative spirit fostered by the initiative:

"For every year that a winner emerges we want to see something better than what the winner of the previous years have done. Women are more articulate with their roles and how to package their products in terms of what they do."

Additional insights from the FFH project manager underscore the initiative's integration of modern communication and campaign strategies to enhance the visibility and influence of women farmers:

"It is essentially media engagement; we have worked with them to do public campaigns, public enlightenment, provided them with small grants to be able to implement initiatives to their own communities, we provided them with trainings on value chains and other climate-smart agriculture and other interventions. We have also linked them up with policymakers in terms of advocacy and communication and leadership skills. We also linked them up with both national international and global spaces."

This multipronged approach not only raises the profile of women farmers but also integrates them into significant policymaking and advocacy platforms, both nationally and internationally.

The initiative's inclusivity has been pivotal in its success, ensuring that women from diverse backgrounds across all regions can participate and benefit from the program. The then-project manager emphasized the inclusive nature of the initiative:

> *"We work with the Ministry of Agriculture; we want it to be part of their initiative. We implement the project together with them in terms of planning and deciding where to host it. We have our local CSOs [civil society organizations] that we work and have a relationship with. We send the designed forms to them. And the INGOs [international nongovernmental organizations] that we work and have a relationship with. We partner in the application/nomination. They, in turn, send out the forms, and we partake in the selection process."*

Another staff member added:

> *I recall there was a time we linked the winners to community engagement at their own level, some of them went as high as meeting with senators in America for example, exposing them to bank facilities, minister of agriculture etc. Those are the kinds of platform that the FFH Initiative created for them. They have been really remarkable, and those women have come to become leaders in their own like and gained better confidence and capacity to develop their farming career.*

The initiative's evolution is further supported by testimonials from the women involved, who have witnessed firsthand the changes in their capabilities and the opportunities afforded to them. An Oxfam staff noted the following comments from participants:

Ogbonge Woman 01:

> *"The attraction for FFH is that Oxfam is trying to empower and recognize women as producers of nutritious food in the country by encouraging women, and this has made the women become more visible. They have also traveled and are able to network and communicate with other stakeholders and state farmers."*

Ogbonge Woman 05:

> *"It was life-changing. Before the training, I wasn't processing my rice. But after Oxfam's training, I started processing my rice and saw significant gains. Oxfam taught us how to document our processes and see if we were making gains. Honestly, whatever I am today in farming, it's because of Oxfam. Emeka from London even came to inspect my cassava farm and gave a good report back to Oxfam!"*

Ogbonge Woman 02:

"We were being supervised after the award was given to us. I was given 200,000 [naira], which I used to acquire land. I was rearing cows, goats, and poultry. I was selected to travel to America in 2015 for Food International Day in Washington. Before then, I travelled to Ethiopia for African women farmers program where we shared our experience as Female Food Heroes. Then we went to Cote d'Ivoire. Oxfam did much with the FFH Initiative, and I gained a lot of exposure with this."

"Before winning, I spent years looking for a loan, and when I won, I was able to buy land with the award money. As the second runner-up, I won 350,000 naira. The first prize was 500,000 naira. With my prize money, I bought land."- Ogbonge Woman 06

"The training I received from Oxfam gave me knowledge and ideas to start school gardening and train other people. I also managed to send my son to a private university."

"It was life-changing. Before the training, I wasn't processing my rice. But after Oxfam's training, I started processing my rice and saw significant gains. Oxfam taught us how to document our processes and see if we were making gains. Honestly, whatever I am today in farming, it's because of Oxfam. Emeka from London even came to inspect my cassava farm and gave a good report back to Oxfam!"

-Ogbonge Woman 05:

This comprehensive narrative underlines the transformative impact of the FFH Initiative, not just in terms of agricultural productivity but also in empowering women to take charge of their development and advocacy efforts, which resonate deeply within their communities. Additionally, the VSLA trainings were equally effective in helping the women mobilize financial resources for their farms and families as well as mobilizing other women farmers to join their cause.

The shift from a purely training-focused initiative to one that embraces a broader spectrum of empowerment, leadership development, and advocacy aligns with global trends in women's empowerment and gender equality in agriculture. This evolution represents a dynamic response to the changing needs and roles of women in rural areas, acknowledging their potential as key agents of change and innovation in agricultural sectors worldwide. By fostering an environment that encourages leadership and advocacy, FFH contributes significantly to the broader goals of sustainable development and gender equality, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable agricultural future.

3.4 Challenges of the FFH Initiative in Nigeria

Despite its successes, the Female Food Heroes (FFH) Initiative has encountered significant challenges, particularly in sustaining partnerships and maintaining continuous engagement with women farmers. The initiative's fluctuating support and resource allocation have occasionally impeded the community-building efforts among women farmers. The former project manager, reflecting on the overarching challenges faced by the initiative, stated:

"The major challenge is the issue of sustainability. There has been no sustainability on Oxfam's end. Another challenge is the issue with

internal staffing. There is also insufficient funding for the women."

These challenges underscore the difficulties in maintaining momentum without consistent organizational support and adequate funding. Sustainability issues often arise from gaps in funding and staffing, which can disrupt the continuity of programs and erode gains made in building community capacities and empowerment.

A project coordinator at Oxfam emphasized the need for consistent engagement and follow-up with participants to ensure the initiative's long-term impact:

"We need to keep a track of all winners in the past and see how we can monitor them to see if they are doing well. Just the way universities create a platform for their alumni, we need to create a platform for the women."

This comment highlights the importance of establishing robust monitoring and follow-up mechanisms to assess the ongoing progress and challenges faced by the participants, ensuring that the benefits of the initiative are sustained over time.

Further complicating the sustainability of partnerships are the logistical challenges of engaging with a geographically dispersed participant base. A project coordinator at Oxfam discussed the practical difficulties in maintaining engagement across various regions:

"The fact that we have not been consistent in engaging them like we used to is a problem. Monitoring has not been quite good. We need to up our monitoring initiative."

This concern reflects the broader issue of resource sufficiency and the need for the initiative to align the incentives with the current economic realities faced by the women, ensuring that the rewards and support provided are both meaningful and impactful. The observation also points to better monitoring practices to better accommodate the realities of the participants' economic and social environments.

Further, ensuring flexibility in the initiative's structure to adapt to changing circumstances and feedback is crucial for maintaining relevance and effectiveness. As highlighted by an Oxfam project coordinator:

"We need to organize them better, establish an alumnus network, and allocate a budget to support their meetings so they can share ideas, lessons, and solutions to keep the movement going. It would also be valuable to engage them in leadership roles across key feminist and gender justice campaigns to ensure women's voices are heard and the platform remains energized."

The integration of structured feedback mechanisms and the creation of alumni networks are strategies that can enhance engagement and provide continuous support to the participants. These networks not only facilitate the sharing of experiences and best practices but also foster a

sense of community and ongoing commitment among the participants.

An important aspect of sustaining partnerships is the financial support for the participants. As the project manager pointed out:

> *"Funding is a challenge. If we have additional fundings, we can do more for the women. We need to be more innovative so as to manage the little funding we have for them."*

This statement underscores the critical role of financial resources in the sustainability of such initiatives. Innovative funding strategies, such as partnerships with the private sector and funding diversification, can provide more stable and continuous support for the programs.

Additionally, enhancing the direct involvement of women in the planning and implementation of activities can lead to more sustainable outcomes. As a project coordinator at Oxfam mentioned:

> *"It may not be specific for women but on our website, we have our email where we get feedbacks from across our projects. People writing, and they get responses. But I am not sure if there is one targeted at a group like this. What we also do is that we have a feedback mechanism meant for partners like financial partners. For loose coalition like this, we only depend on the partners managing them to get feedback from them directly and that makes it into the reports."*

Lessons learned from these challenges highlight the need for robust monitoring systems, innovative funding solutions, and structured feedback mechanisms to ensure the long-term sustainability and impact of the initiative.

From the Oxfam end, the FFH Initiative has faced significant challenges in sustaining partnerships and continuous engagement, primarily due to inadequate funding to meet the women's needs, inadequate staffing for monitoring, and the logistical complexities of managing a widespread participant base. On the other hand, the challenges of the FFH Initiative from the perspectives of the FFH participants agree with those from the staff observations: that despite the initial successes of the initiative, engagement reduced at some point.

One of the recurrent themes from the FFH participants concerns the consistency of support from Oxfam. Participants expressed concerns about the sustainability of the FFH Initiative, particularly regarding ongoing engagement and support from Oxfam. They noted how Oxfam initially provided support and training but later disengaged, leaving a void in communication and program follow-up. Similarly, there was mention of a lack of effective engagement and training since their involvement, indicating a potential decline in program sustainability over time.

> *"Oxfam stopped engaging us at some point. The reason could be that the people we knew/started with left and there was a vacuum. We did not know who to communicate with. … Whenever we want to organize a program, we do not bother going through Oxfam, we just go through Elder Resource (a partner) since they have been assisting*

us." – Ogbonge Woman 01

During the period we weren't hearing from Oxfam, the staff member we were trying to contact was sick and later passed away. One died, one left, and another left but then came back. A new person came two or three years ago and started calling us, but we didn't hear from her again until we were invited to the FFH ceremony in 2024." – Ogbonge Woman 04

The women participants expressed frustration over the lack of communication and follow-up from Oxfam. They highlighted a period of silence from Oxfam, indicating a breakdown in communication channels with the women farmers. For instance, despite a target set by Oxfam to train millions of women, there was no follow-up on progress. Ogbonge Woman 01 added to her previous comment:

"Oxfam gave us a target to train more than 10 million Ogbonge Women, but they did not follow up with the statistics to know how far we have gone."

This speaks to the adequacy of monitoring and the establishment of effective communication mechanisms. This lack of monitoring could have led to inefficiencies and missed opportunities to scale successful strategies or address areas needing improvement.

Similarly, Ogbonge Woman 03 mentioned that while there may have been previous engagements with previous winners, she had experienced no significant training or interaction from Oxfam after her involvement began in 2022. She said she suggested improvements, but no actions were taken. Ogbonge Woman 03 stated:

"Maybe the past FFH have had engagements, but since I came in, there has been no effective engagement. The only activities I attended were the advocacy engagement talks organized by YMCA (about three of them). They have several women groups they work with; we were called to be part of it. There has been no training or engagement on Oxfam's end. They interviewed me at some point, and I made suggestions on the things that could be done for the women but nothing was done afterwards."

Ogbonge Woman 02 also highlighted the lack of engagement, noting that the women were not called for any activities for about six years under the Buhari regime, with the program ending in 2017 without further continuation efforts despite advocacy. Ogbonge Woman 02 explained:

"Oxfam has been quiet for a long time; the women are not being engaged. There have been no trainings conducted for the women. Since the Buhari regime, we weren't called for about six years until 2022. Oxfam said the program was for six years and ended in 2017. In 2017, I was taken to Oxfam US to advocate for the continuation of the program to help smallholder female farmers in Nigeria, but the next year, nothing happened."

Ogbonge Woman 04, Ogbonge Woman 05, and Woman 06 echoed these sentiments, describing a period of silence and disengagement from

Oxfam. Ogbonge Woman 04 experienced significant personal setbacks on her farm during this time without any support from Oxfam. Ogbonge Woman 04 shared:

> *"Yes, from around 2019 to 2024, I didn't hear from Oxfam and I didn't reach out to them either. During this silent period, my farm got burnt, and I had flooding issues, which forced me to leave that farm and start cultivating a new one with cassava and palms."*

Ogbonge Woman 05 explained that after the death of a key contact (Chris), there was a disengagement period, though she did later attend ceremonies in 2022 and 2024, with financial support. She also faced significant challenges in her farming activities due to lack of processing resources and financial support. Ogbonge Woman 05 said:

> *"Yes, after Chris's death, there was a period of disengagement. But in 2022, I was called to the FFH ceremony because someone else from Abia won. Oxfam took care of all our logistics and feeding. I also attended in 2024 and received some stipends from Oxfam before and after the ceremony."*

Woman 06 mentioned that activities dwindled during the Buhari administration, with minimal engagement from 2018 until a reunion in 2024. She also pointed out that crucial extension services provided by the government had become nonfunctional, exacerbating the challenges faced by local farmers. Woman 06 explained:

> *"During the Buhari administration, there was a hold-up in activities. We only met once or twice in 2017. From 2018 to 2024, there was minimal engagement until the 2024 reunion. Also, extension services used to be crucial; the government trained people to support local farmers. It is no longer functional."*

For the women, financial challenges are significant concerns. One woman farmer, Ogbonge Woman 03, detailed the financial struggles that impact their agricultural activities:"*'Oxfam should provide financial capacities for the women. Times are really hard, and with lack of electricity, the last time I did production in my factory was January. I cannot afford diesel, and there is no power."*

Another woman, Ogbonge Woman 04, added:

> *"… I also have issues with processing and would appreciate help with a milling machine for palm oil and a Garri processing machine."*

Ogbonge Woman 05 added that:

> *"Fertilizer is hard to come by; the Ministry of Agriculture doesn't provide it despite filling forms and queuing for long. I've only received four bags of fertilizer from our constituency House of Representatives member that I had mobilized for during elections in the past. I also lack processing, peeling, drying, grinding, and frying machines, so I do everything manually and pay people to help. I could do much better if I had my own processing machines."*

For Ogbonge Woman 04, it was about water pumps for dry season farming due to flooding or the rainy seasons:

> *"… We need water pumps for dry season farming and demonstrations with solar water pumps."*

These requests highlight the financial constraints in terms of agricultural equipment and inputs that the women cannot afford themselves and needed Oxfam to intervene in, beyond the trainings that they had received.

In addition, social and cultural barriers also significantly challenge the sustainability of partnerships. The same woman farmer shared insights on the cultural challenges related to land ownership and gender dynamics:

> *"In some states, they do not give women land; this VSLA training has helped the women understand that they can get lands of their own and they do not have to rely on their husbands for household management."*

Addressing these deep-seated social and cultural issues is crucial for the long-term success of initiatives aimed at empowering women in agriculture. These barriers not only affect women's ability to participate fully in the initiatives but also limit their growth and development within their communities. Participants expressed a desire for more direct involvement in planning and executing programs. As one respondent noted,

> *"Oxfam should find a way to work with the women directly, fund their initiative, continue to support their organization and coordination."*

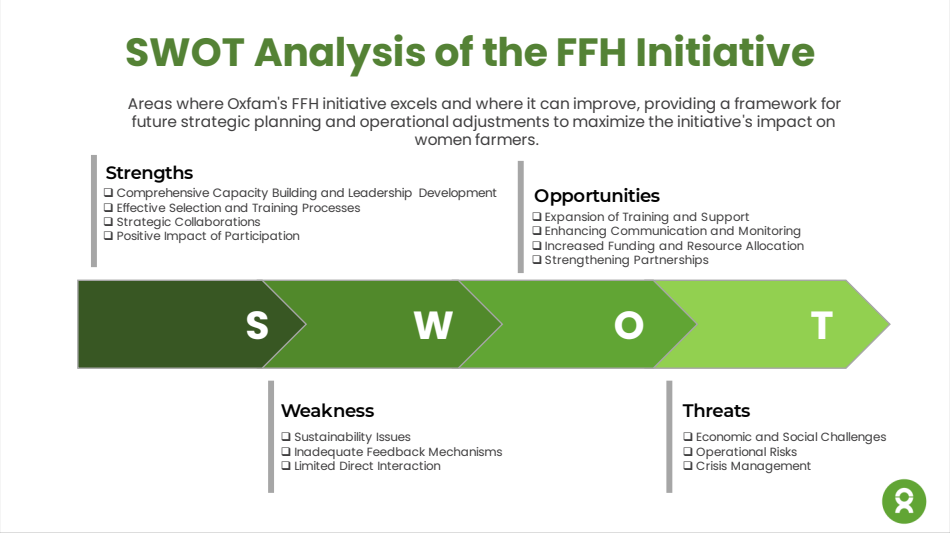
This emphasizes the need for a more participatory approach in program design and implementation. The challenges faced by the FFH Initiative, particularly from the perspective of the women FFH participants, highlight the need for consistent support, improved financial sustainability, effective monitoring, and the addressing of social and cultural barriers. Overcoming these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes robust support systems, protective measures for women's financial assets, and cultural change initiatives that empower women to own land and participate equally in agricultural and community activities. Addressing these issues is vital for the FFH Initiative to achieve its goals of empowering women farmers and fostering sustainable community development.

3.5 SWOT analysis of the FFH Initiative's engagement strategy

This strength, weakness, opportunity, threat (SWOT) analysis outlines the strategic areas where Oxfam's FFH Initiative excels and where it can

improve, providing a framework for future strategic planning and operational adjustments to maximize the initiative's impact on women farmers. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: SWOT analysis of the FFH Initiative



Strengths

1. **Comprehensive capacity building and leadership development**: The initiative strongly focuses on enhancing the capabilities of women farmers through training on village savings and loan (VSL) schemes and leadership development programs. This has significantly contributed to women's financial growth and independence.

2. **Effective selection and training processes**: The process involves a rigorous application, screening, and selection process that ensures candidates are chosen based on merit, leading to a fair and effective program. However, there is room for improvement in terms of the initial outreach so that every woman farmer who is qualified can have equal chances of seeing and filling out the forms to compete equally.

3. **Strategic collaborations**: Collaboration with various stakeholders, including the Ministry of Agriculture, local CSOs, INGOs, and private sector actors enrich the initiative's resource pool and provide comprehensive support for training and development.

4. **Positive impact of participation**: Participation in the FFH Initiative has led to substantial empowerment of women farmers, with winners using awards to invest in their businesses, and gaining exposure and networking opportunities that enhance their economic and social standing.

Weaknesses

1. **Sustainability issues**: There is a noted lack of continued

engagement and support from Oxfam, which impacts the sustainability of the initiative. Internal staffing issues and insufficient funding further exacerbate these challenges.

2. **Inadequate feedback mechanisms**: Although feedback is collected, there is a need for more structured feedback mechanisms and better organization to ensure continuous improvement of the initiative based on participant inputs.

3. **Limited direct interaction**: Feedback and case studies indicate a gap in direct interaction between Oxfam and participants, which could hinder the effective assessment and response to evolving needs.

Opportunities

1. **Expansion of training and support**: There is an opportunity to expand training programs and support systems across more communities, increasing the initiative's impact and reach.

2. **Enhancing communication and monitoring**: Implementing robust communication strategies and continuous monitoring could greatly improve the initiative's effectiveness and help maintain momentum.

3. **Increased funding and resource allocation**: By securing more sponsors and engaging more government officials, Oxfam could enhance the visibility and funding of the project, allowing for a greater scale and scope of operations.

4. **Strengthening partnerships**: Strengthening existing partnerships and forging new ones with organizations like Agra, Action Aid, and International Labour Organization (ILO) could provide additional resources and advocacy opportunities.

Threats

1. **Economic and social challenges**: Women farmers face significant economic impacts and social challenges such as gender-based violence and difficulties in land acquisition, which can undermine the initiative's goals.

2. **Operational risks**: Challenges such as insufficient engagement, lack of follow-up, and communication breakdowns between Oxfam and the participants pose risks to the initiative's effectiveness.

3. **Crisis management**: Inadequate crisis management during economic downturns or agricultural off-seasons can lead to decreased participation and engagement from the women farmers.

3.6 Feedback from participants on the FFH Initiative can be enhanced

Participants of the Female Food Heroes (FFH) Initiative have provided several key recommendations for Oxfam to enhance the program's effectiveness and reach. These suggestions focus on increasing inclusivity of the FFH competition, expanding training and support, improving communication and follow-up, improving access to resources and financial support, utilizing existing networks and expanding outreach, leveraging government support, enhancing direct engagement and support, creating an "alumni" network, and enhancing exposure to opportunities and collaboration.

Increase participation and opportunities

Participants emphasized the need for Oxfam to increase the number of participants selected and the number of winners in the FFH Initiative. This would provide more opportunities for women across different states and help to foster a more inclusive competition:

> *"Oxfam should increase the number of participants to be selected during the competition. Before now, we keep experiencing situations where over 1,000 nomination forms will be filled by participants and no one was selected." – LNGO Partner 01*

> *"Oxfam should continue with the FFH Initiative and promote the competition among the women. They should increase the number of winners and opportunities. The winners should stop operating as individuals but as a team. The women should encourage other women to become better at what they do. Oxfam should grant more opportunities for more winners. We should have more than one or two winners during the FFH competition." – LNGO Partner 02*

> *"Most winners of the FFH have been coming from a particular state, especially Benue state. It should be spread out across various states. And we that Ogbonge has worked for will go to those states to brief the winners on what has worked for us so far." – Ogbonge Woman 01*

Enhanced training and support

Participants stressed the importance of continuous and ongoing training and support for women in different communities. This includes technical training, financial support, and help with accessing agricultural technologies:

> *"Oxfam should train and support women in different communities. There are about 27 local governments in my area but I've only worked with three local governments." – Ogbonge Woman 02*

> *"Help the women to access technology when it comes to tractors, good seedlings, fertilizers, etc. because women struggle, and it is men that enjoy the most. Oxfam needs to expand the knowledge and*

scopes of these women, teach them about packaging to meet standards so as to make their products marketable." – Ogbonge Woman 03

"Oxfam should help facilitate meetings and provide physical and financial support for these meetings, where we train women on VSL, health, climate change, cooperative activities, and making compost instead of using chemical fertilizers." – Ogbonge Woman 02

"I also have issues with processing and would appreciate help with a milling machine for palm oil and a Garri processing machine." – Ogbonge Woman 04

"We need water pumps for dry season farming and demonstrations with solar water pumps." – Woman 06

Better communication and follow-up

Regular communication and follow-up from Oxfam were highlighted as crucial for maintaining engagement and ensuring the success of the initiatives:

"I recommend that Oxfam maintains regular communication and invitations. Quarterly check-ins and advice would be very helpful." – Ogbonge Woman 04

"Since 2016, the federal Ministry of Agriculture requested a list of women farmers seeking loans, but nothing happened. Oxfam should follow up on such matters with the Ministry of Agriculture." – Ogbonge Woman 02

Improved access to resources and financial support

The need for improved access to financial resources, agricultural inputs, and processing machines was a common request. Participants also asked for support in accessing loans and grants:

"Help FFHs access loans or grants, which is very important." – Ogbonge Woman 02

"Oxfam should provide financial capacities for the women. Times are really hard and with lack of electricity, the last time I did production in my factory was January. I cannot afford diesel, and there is no power." – Ogbonge Woman 03

"Additionally, supporting us with processing machines would be a huge help. It would benefit all farmers of the same product and help us save more." – Ogbonge Woman 05

Utilizing existing networks and expanding outreach

Participants suggested using existing networks of Ogbonge Women for distributing forms and facilitating outreach. This would help in reaching more women and ensuring a broader impact:

> *"Forms should be sent to Ogbonge Women to distribute in their communities." – Ogbonge Woman 02*

> *"Oxfam should have a detailed list of all Ogbonge Women farmers." – Ogbonge Woman 01*

> *"Distribute forms through Ogbonge Women since politicians and the Ministry of Agriculture often don't." – Ogbonge Woman 05*

Leveraging state and federal government support

Working with state governments and relevant ministries to support the women farmers and revamp extension services was seen as essential:

> *"Oxfam should work with state governments to revamp these extension services and collaborate with FFH winners in different regions to spearhead these initiatives along with their clusters." – Ogbonge Woman 06*

> *"Advocacy visit to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture." – Ogbonge Woman 01*

Direct engagement and support

One staff member emphasized the necessity for Oxfam to sustain its initiatives and work more directly with the women involved. He highlighted the importance of regular meetings and communications to support the organization and coordination of women's initiatives:

> *"Oxfam should find a way to work with the women directly, fund their initiatives, continue to support their organization and coordination." – The initial FFH project manager*

Creating a supportive "alumni" network

The idea of creating a platform similar to a university alumni network was proposed. This platform would facilitate better organization, communication, and support among the women:

> *"We need to organize them better, establish an alumni network, and allocate a budget to support their meetings so they can share ideas, lessons, and solutions to keep the movement going. It would also be valuable to engage them in leadership roles across key feminist and gender justice campaigns, ensuring women's voices are heard and the platform remains energized."."*

> *"… We need to keep a track of all winners in the past and see how we can monitor them to see if they are doing well. Just the way*

universities create a platform for their alumni, we need to create a platform for the women." – A project coordinator at Oxfam

Exposure to opportunities and collaboration

Participants highlighted the need for Oxfam to expose women to more opportunities, collaborations, and support from government facilities and other organizations:

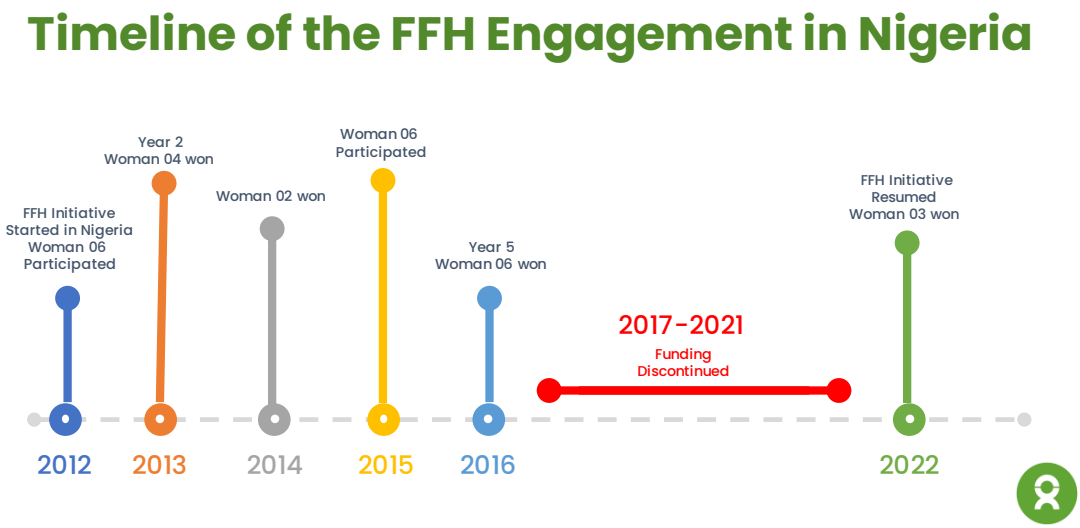
"We need to expose them better to government facilities like the African Development Bank (ADB) and Bank of Agriculture (BOA) to see if they are able to access those facilities to improve whatever prize we have given them and help them scale up their farms."

"… Keep them abreast with current happenings, technology, trends, opportunities that they can grab beyond what we bring as an organization and perhaps also look at other like coalitions that they can benefit from, then create that synergy with them and link them up." – A project coordinator at Oxfam

4 Lessons learned from Oxfam Nigeria's internal processes for the FFH Initiative

The Oxfam FFH Initiative is a significant program aimed at empowering women farmers in Nigeria by enhancing their capabilities, providing economic opportunities, and fostering leadership. The results of the study indicate a lack of FFH engagement between 2017 and 2021, and the program was said to have been discontinued after the 2016 edition due to funding that got discontinued. The FFH Initiative started in 2012, with Woman 06 participating in its inaugural year. In 2013, Ogbonge Woman 04 won the award, followed by a year of significant participation in 2014 when Woman 06 participated again, and Ogbonge Woman 02, Ogbonge Woman 01, and Ogbonge Woman 05 emerged as winners. Woman 06 continued her involvement in 2015 and finally won in 2016. The initiative ended after 2016 due to the conclusion of its five-year funding period. According to Ogbonge Woman 02, she was informed by the project manager that the program had ended due to the discontinued funding. In 2017, Ogbonge Woman 02 advocated for the program's continuation during a visit to the US. The program was re-initiated in 2022, with Ogbonge Woman 03 winning the award that year. However, Ogbonge Woman 03 reported no engagement, training, or activities, as key personnel were no longer part of the program, and there was a lack of dedicated staff and proper handover of records and reports. See Figure 3.

Figure 3 Timeline of the FFH Initiative in Nigeria from 2012



The FFH Initiative is strategically poised to make substantial impacts on the lives of women farmers by involving them in capacity-building

activities, leadership development, and economic empowerment through the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) programs. The initiative's design, which includes application processes, training sessions, and networking opportunities with policymakers and global spaces, aligns well with its overarching goal of empowering women in the agricultural sector. These strategies are indeed sufficient in theory and planning to meet the goals set forth by the FFH Initiative. However, the realization of these goals is significantly hampered by the three major operational challenges: funding, staffing, and reporting. The current strategy's execution heavily relies on limited resources, personnel, and reporting standards, which undermines its capacity to effectively sustain engagement and support among the women it aims to empower.

Despite its commendable objectives and well-structured approaches, there are critical areas within the initiative's operation that merit further consideration. The array of challenges identified throughout the FFH Initiative—ranging from lack of sustained engagement and continuous support to internal staffing constraints, funding inadequacies, and significant communication and reporting gaps—fundamentally boil down to two pivotal issues: inadequate staffing and insufficient funding. These core challenges form the crux of the operational difficulties faced by the initiative, influencing every aspect from daily operations to long-term sustainability. Addressing these fundamental issues is imperative to enhancing the effectiveness of the FFH Initiative and ensuring that it can meet its goals of empowering women farmers and fostering sustainable agricultural practices in Nigeria. This conclusion explores the sufficiency of the strategy relative to the initiative's goals, the issues related to funding and staffing, and the implications of the current operational model on the sustainability and effectiveness of the program.

The following captures the issues identified by this study, across different stages of the initiative, and explores their implications on the program's effectiveness and sustainability.

1. At stage 2 of the FFH process, while pre-award activities have been generally satisfactory, the 2022 report shows no evidence of Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) training conducted before or after the award. This omission represents a missed opportunity for enhancing financial literacy and economic resilience among participants. Moreover, the 2022 event was co-organized solely by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) and Oxfam, with no other sponsors involved. This contrasts with the 2014 report, which mentioned the involvement of 19 private sector organizations. The need to expand partnerships is evident to ensure comprehensive support and increased impact.
2. At stage 4 of the FFH process, post-award support activities have been notably ineffective. The 2022 report lacks evidence of media coverage for the event, unlike the comprehensive media engagement reported in 2014. The earlier report highlighted extensive radio and television coverage, amplifying the voices and achievements of the awardees. This gap in media engagement diminishes the initiative's potential to inspire broader societal change and support for women farmers. Advocacy and partnership efforts also seem to have reduced over time, further limiting the initiative's reach and impact.

3. At stage 5 of the FFH process, a significant deficiency is the absence of a structured feedback mechanism and a robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework. Regular quarterly reports and yearly MEL assessments according to the project's MEL plan are the expected structure for tracking progress, evaluating impact, and addressing emerging challenges effectively. Oxfam Nigeria appears to have significant gaps in internal reporting and documentation. Available documents for desk review include only a limited number of reports from 2014 and 2022 only. There is a lack of a standardized reporting structure, as records indicate that Oxfam has not adhered to the Gates reporting structure prescribed by the OPA (2021). This indicates a gap in documentation and reporting of approved reports for future reference and use. Improved internal processes, including conducting MEL and ensuring systematic documentation of all reports, will facilitate smooth continuity for new staff joining the project and help track the project's impact over time. The absence of a continuous monitoring and feedback framework within the FFH Initiative has been a significant oversight. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are crucial for measuring the effectiveness of any program and for providing data-driven insights that could inform strategic adjustments. Continuous feedback mechanisms are equally important as they help in capturing the FFH participants' voices and experiences, which can lead to improved program designs and strategies. The lack of these systems within the FFH Initiative means that opportunities for iterative improvements based on real-time data and participant feedback are missed. This oversight can lead to the persistence of unaddressed challenges and the potential dilution of the program's impacts over time.
4. For funding, the responses from the participants indicate that Oxfam's funding is insufficient to meet their capital needs for enhancing productivity, such as acquiring lands and processing machines, while Oxfam Nigeria seems to be funded only for the selection process, training, ceremony, and awarding small prizes. Oxfam needs to communicate the project's purpose more effectively to participants, who may have expectations of capital-intensive support. Oxfam needs to continuously reiterate that the initiative is fundamentally about capacity building through training, advocacy, and media engagement, accompanied by occasional minor financial support. It is not designed to support capital-intensive projects like providing large hectares of farmland or machinery. The initiative aims to select exceptional women farmers, recognize their efforts, and enhance their leadership and agricultural capacities through training and networking.
5. For staffing, the FFH Initiative seems to have suffered from inadequate staffing. The program appears to have relied on a single staff member, the program manager, supported by a finance coordinator and project managers from different programs within the organization. The program manager appears to have had an assistant who maintained closer contact with the women. When the assistant fell ill and subsequently passed away, communication

between the women and Oxfam significantly decreased. For a program of FFH's scope and importance, having a dedicated staff team is not just beneficial but essential. The current operational model lacks a specialized team responsible for continuous monitoring, engagement, documentation, and feedback—elements that are vital for the adaptive management of any developmental initiative. This gap has evidently led to insufficient follow-through on activities, inadequate documentation of processes and impacts, and sporadic feedback mechanisms. A dedicated team would ensure that the FFH Initiative has the constant oversight and specialized focus required to adaptively manage the program, tailor interventions as necessary, and systematically scale successful strategies. Such a team would also foster a more personalized and consistent communication pathway between the participants and the managing organization, enhancing trust and participation levels among the FFH participants.

6. Additionally at stage 1 of the FFH process, the current nomination process relies heavily on paper forms submitted through partners, introducing risks of politicization and reducing transparency. Extending the process directly through women farmers and reducing intermediary involvement is recommended. Collecting forms electronically on the Oxfam website and sharing the link with Ogbonge Women can streamline the process, enhance transparency, and optimize resources. Implementing software for automated sorting and selection based on set criteria will further improve efficiency and eco-friendliness. This approach aligns with the observation that extending paper forms through women farmers can reduce politicization and improve transparency.

Overall, the FFH Initiative suffers from a critical lack of funding, staffing and reporting that are fundamental aspects to the continuity and expansion of any program. It has been observed that the program disproportionately relies on the program manager and contributions from national youth service volunteers, who, while enthusiastic, are not professional staff dedicated solely to the FFH Initiative. This reliance indicates a significant gap in the professional and continuous management of the program. Most staff members involved are concurrently engaged with other duties within Oxfam, which may lead to divided attention and reduced efficacy in handling the specific needs of the FFH Initiative. Temporary or part-time contributors like youth service volunteers, although a cost-effective option, may not possess the requisite skills or the continuity needed to drive the initiative's objectives. Such an arrangement can lead to inconsistencies in program delivery and a lack of robust development strategies that require sustained effort and expertise.

5 Recommendations

In light of the results and lessons learned in this study, a series of strategic recommendations are proposed to enhance the program's effectiveness and sustainability. These recommendations are aimed at addressing the critical gaps in funding and staffing, which are essential for expanding the initiative's scope and improving its operational capacity. By implementing these recommendations, the FFH Initiative can enhance its operational effectiveness, extend its reach, and deepen its impact, ensuring that it not only meets but exceeds its goals of empowering women farmers in Nigeria. These strategic investments in operational capacity are essential for the long-term sustainability and success of the initiative.

1. Increase budget allocation for the FFH Initiative

A significant increase in the budget allocation for the FFH Initiative is critical. This will directly support the expansion of the program's activities and the enhancement of its impact. To build a dedicated team, it is imperative to have the financial resources to hire full-time, skilled personnel who are committed solely to the FFH Initiative. This team would manage daily operations, monitor progress, and engage directly with participants. Additional funds would allow for the development and implementation of comprehensive training and mentoring programs that are essential for the capacity building of women farmers. Additional funding would be useful to establish a fund to provide soft grants or microloans to women farmers. This funding can facilitate the purchase of essential farming equipment, seeds, and other inputs to enhance their agricultural activities. The FFH Initiative needs to facilitate broader geographical coverage and deeper penetration into rural areas where most women farmers are located, ensuring that the benefits of the program reach the most marginalized groups. Additional funding may also be necessary to provide some key resources like processing machines to the women to improve their efficiency and the overall impact of the project.

2. Structured and increased staffing

Staffing is a cornerstone that supports all other elements of the program. Recommendations for staffing include the establishment of positions such as program managers, training coordinators, monitoring and evaluation specialists, and community liaisons. These roles will ensure that there are staff members focused on every critical aspect of the program, from training delivery to feedback collection and impact assessment. Oxfam should then invest in continuous professional development for these staff to ensure they are equipped with the latest skills and knowledge in agricultural development, gender empowerment, and project management. Sustainability officers should then be appointed who would specifically focus on creating long-term plans for the sustainability of the women's projects post-initiation phase. See recommended minimal staffing structure for the FFH Initiative below, with a minimum of

three FFH staff dedicated to the FFH project, one member of the finance team from central administration of Oxfam Nigeria dedicated to the FFH project, and one external M&E specialist for an unbiased perspective.

Program manager

Oversees the entire FFH Initiative, manages day-to-day operations, and ensures alignment with Oxfam's broader goals:

- conducting strategic planning and decision-making;
- coordinating with stakeholders and partners;
- implementing program activities;
- managing budgets and resources;
- supervising all staff;
- reporting to Oxfam's senior management and funders.

Training and community engagement coordinator

Develops and oversees training programs, manages community engagement, and acts as the primary liaison with participants:

- designing training curricula based on the needs of women farmers;
- organizing and conducting training sessions;
- evaluating training effectiveness and making necessary adjustments;
- engaging with women farmers and community leaders;
- facilitating communication and feedback;
- organizing community-level events and forums.

Advocacy and communications officer

Promotes the FFH Initiative and its achievements, manages media relations, and coordinates advocacy campaigns:

- developing and implementing media strategies;
- engaging with local, national, and international media;
- creating promotional materials and content;
- managing social media presence;
- coordinating advocacy campaigns;
- establishing regular forums for participant interaction.

Finance and administrative coordinator (from central administration)

Manages the financial aspects of the FFH Initiative and provides administrative support:

- conducting budget planning and management;
- overseeing financial reporting and compliance;
- processing grants and payments;
- managing communications and correspondence;
- organizing meetings and events;
- maintaining records and documentation;

- assisting with logistical arrangements.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and sustainability specialist (external)

Monitors and evaluates the impact of the FFH Initiative, and develops sustainability plans for participants' projects:

- developing and implementing the MEL framework;
- collecting and analyzing data;
- preparing regular progress reports;
- providing feedback for continuous improvement;
- developing sustainability plans for participants' projects;
- identifying and securing additional funding sources;
- providing guidance on sustainable agricultural practices.

3. Improved communication strategies

Effective communication is essential for the success of any community-based initiative. To enhance communication within the FFH Initiative, Oxfam should implement a structured quarterly communication schedule whereby participants receive regular updates about the program and can provide their feedback through multiple channels. Additionally, Oxfam should establish quarterly forums at the community level where participants can interact with FFH staff, discuss their challenges, and share success stories. This will not only improve communication but also build a sense of community and collective learning. Oxfam can leverage technology to create digital platforms for training, information dissemination, and active engagement with the women farmers.

4. Enhanced pre-award activities

To maximize the impact of the FFH Initiative, it is crucial to expand the range and depth of engagement activities. First, conduct targeted training sessions that are tailored to the specific needs of the women farmers, including advanced agricultural techniques, financial literacy, and leadership skills. Second, develop a mentoring program that pairs novice women farmers with experienced ones, facilitating knowledge transfer and empowering women to become leaders within their communities. Third, organize field days and practical demonstrations where women can directly apply what they have learned in a supportive environment.

The lack of Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) training in recent years is a significant gap. This training is vital for improving financial literacy and economic resilience among participants. To address this, it is crucial to reinstate VSLA training as a mandatory component both before and after the award, ensuring participants are equipped with essential financial skills. Additionally, expanding partnerships is necessary. Actively seeking new partnerships, similar to the 2014 model that included private sector organizations, can provide a broader support base and enhance the initiative's impact.

5. Strengthen post-award support

Effective post-award support is crucial for maintaining the momentum of the program and enhancing its impact. The 2022 report highlighted a lack of media engagement and reduced advocacy efforts. To rectify this, Oxfam should revive media engagement by re-establishing comprehensive media coverage to amplify the achievements of awardees and inspire broader societal change. Engaging with multiple media channels ensures widespread visibility. Additionally, increasing advocacy efforts is essential. Reinvigorating advocacy activities will maintain public and governmental support for women farmers, which includes providing regular updates to stakeholders and the general public on the progress and achievements of the initiative. Oxfam can also intensify advocacy and media engagement efforts to help these women access the equipment and resources they need. Intensifying advocacy efforts can encourage the government, partners, or sponsors to provide these resources to women in all states.

6. Modify nomination and application processes

Simplify application process to remove the nomination factor and make application more user-friendly and accessible to women farmers who may not have formal education, privileged information, or access to partner organizations distributing application forms. This could involve simplifying the language used in forms, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and providing assistance during the application process. Further, all applications should be made electronic so that there would be less paper usage. Aside from saving the environment, doing so supports the streamlining and automation of the selection process. Additionally, when the forms are made public, the women can receive help from their cluster leaders and existing Ogbonge Women in filling out applications and understanding the program requirements, where needed. Having the forms electronically available in public spaces also creates indirect publicity over social media.

In other words, the current nomination process may be prone to politicization and may lack transparency. To improve this, digitizing the nomination process is recommended. Collecting nomination forms electronically through the Oxfam website and sharing links with Ogbonge Women can reduce intermediary involvement and enhance transparency. Implementing software for automated sorting and selection based on set criteria will ensure an unbiased and efficient selection process. After all, the women participating in the FFH Initiative have acknowledged their use of various communication channels to stay connected and informed. They utilize phone calls, WhatsApp, text messages, and emails to communicate effectively within their clusters and with Oxfam staff. These platforms enable them to exchange information, seek support, share experiences, and receive updates related to the initiative's activities. This shows that accessing and sharing application forms with their clusters is feasible, as can be seen from the comments below:

"It may not be specific for women but on our website, we have our

email where we get feedbacks from across our projects; people writing and they get responses." – Staff

Communication has been okay. … We use emails, the FFH platform on WhatsApp, and calls. Initially, … was our contact, and now it's ..." – Ogbonge Woman 02

7. Implement proposed metrics for continuous MEL of the FFH Initiative

While an adaptable general MEL plan for the FFH for Tanzania, Nigeria, and Ethiopia, exists, this study did not uncover any details or methodologies specifically dedicated to assessing the success or progress of the program. The absence of such metrics signifies a crucial gap in the initiative's structural framework, potentially hindering the systematic tracking of achievements and areas needing improvement. Given this significant finding, it is recommended that a comprehensive set of evaluation metrics be established. These metrics should be designed to effectively monitor the initiative's impact on women farmers' empowerment, the sustainability of their agricultural practices, and their evolving roles within their communities and beyond.

The recommended metrics encompass a variety of key performance indicators that span from direct program outputs to broader impact assessments. See Table 3. These include measuring participation rates, satisfaction levels, skill enhancements, leadership development, and economic impacts among the participants. Additionally, the metrics aim to capture the sustainability of the program and its long-term effects on the community and policy levels. The proposed metrics can be modified as required in line with Oxfam's overall policies.

Implementing these metrics will not only allow Oxfam to quantify the success and impact of the FFH Initiative but will also provide essential data to continually refine and enhance the program's effectiveness. By integrating these evaluation metrics into the FFH's operational framework, Oxfam can ensure more robust monitoring, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making, ultimately leading to more profound and sustainable impacts for the women farmers it aims to support.

Table 3: Proposed evaluation metrics for the FFH Initiative

Strategic objective	Metric	Definition	Measurement method	Actionable steps	Timeline	Responsibilities	Evaluation metrics
Enhance engagement and participation	**Metric 1: Participation rate**	The percentage of targeted women farmers who actively participate in the FFH programs and activities.	Compare the number of active participants to the total number of women farmers targeted annually.	- Develop targeted outreach campaigns.	Quarterly for campaigns	Marketing team	- 20% annual increase in participation rates.
	Metric 2: Satisfaction level	The degree of satisfaction among participants regarding the organization, relevance, and content of the training and support provided.	Conduct annual surveys to gather feedback from participants, using Likert scale questions to quantify satisfaction levels.	- Organize community engagement events.	Bi-annually for events	Community relations team	- 15% improvement in annual satisfaction scores.
Strengthen capacity building and leadership development	**Metric 3: Skill enhancement**	Improvement in agricultural skills and knowledge as a result of the initiative's training programs.	Pre- and post-training assessments to measure increases in knowledge and practical skills.	- Implement training programs on agricultural practices and leadership.	Semi-annually	Training coordinator	- 25% increase in skill assessment scores.
	Metric 4: Leadership development	The number of women who take on leadership roles within their communities post-engagement with FFH.	Track the involvement of participants in community leadership roles and decision-making forums before and after the program.	- Establish mentorship programs with alumni.	Ongoing	Alumni network coordinator	- 30% of participants in leadership roles within their communities.
Boost economic impact through direct support	**Metric 5: Income increase**	Change in the income levels of participants due to enhanced farming practices and access to markets.	Compare income levels before and after participation using financial surveys and follow-up interviews.	- Provide micro-grants and soft loans.	Annually	Financial support team	- 20% increase in average income of participants.
	Metric 6:	Expansion of agricultural	Annual follow-up	- Facilitate	Quarterly	Business	- 15% growth

Strategic objective	Metric	Definition	Measurement method	Actionable steps	Timeline	Responsibilities	Evaluation metrics
	Business growth	activities or start-up of new agri-businesses by FFH participants.	interviews to document new business ventures or expansions of existing ones.	access to markets and business development training.		development team	in business ventures by participants.
Ensure sustainability and long-term impact	**Metric 7: Program continuity**	The sustainability of the initiative through ongoing funding, participation, and community support.	Annual reviews of funding levels, participant retention rates, and community support indicators.	- Develop partnerships for funding.	Ongoing	Partnership manager	- Stable or increasing funding levels annually.
	Metric 8: Long-term impact	The sustained improvement in living standards, agricultural productivity, and empowerment of women farmers.	Conduct longitudinal studies to assess changes in agricultural productivity, community status, and empowerment indicators over multiple years.	- Implement a sustainability fund.	Annually	Finance manager	- Participant retention rate of 85%.
Amplify advocacy and policy influence	**Metric 9: Policy engagement**	The level of involvement of FFH participants in agricultural policy development and advocacy.	Track instances of participant involvement in policy discussions, submissions to policy drafts, or testimonies at agricultural forums.	- Engage participants in policymaking workshops and advocacy training.	Bi-annually	Advocacy coordinator	- 30% increase in policy engagement activities.
	Metric 10: Network and partnership growth	Expansion of partnerships with local and international organizations that can support women farmers.	Document new and ongoing partnerships annually, assessing the nature and depth of each partnership in supporting FFH goals.	- Organize policy forums for participant interaction with policymakers.	Annually	Policy liaison	- Documented changes in agricultural policies benefiting women farmers.
MEL implementation and reporting	**Metric 11: Data collection**	Utilize a mix of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, including surveys, interviews, focus groups, and participant observation.		- Collect qualitative and quantitative data.	Ongoing	MEL team	-Data regularly collected and available to support evaluation

Strategic objective	Metric	Definition	Measurement method	Actionable steps	Timeline	Responsibilities	Evaluation metrics
	Metric 12: Reporting frequency	Provide annual reports to stakeholders with findings from each metric, alongside recommendations for improving the FFH Initiative.		- Provide bi-annual reports to stakeholders.	Bi-annual	MEL team	- Bi-annual progress reports and stakeholder meetings.
	Metric 13: Stakeholder feedback	Engage stakeholders every three years, to review metric outcomes and refine evaluation strategies to ensure relevance and responsiveness to the initiative's goals.			Three years	MEL team	- Feedback incorporation and strategy refinement.

Source: Developed by the research consultant

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Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

Study Title	**Analysis of the Female Food Hero (FFH) Engagement Strategy**
Organization	**Oxfam in Nigeria**
Research Lead	**Dr. Kingsley Onana**

You are invited to take part in a study on analysis of the challenges and opportunities involved in engaging Ogbonge Women in the FFH Initiative in Nigeria.

This Participant Information Sheet will help you decide if you would like to take part. It sets out why the researcher is doing the study, what your participation would involve, what the benefits and risks to you might be, and what would happen after the study ends. I will go through this information with you and answer any questions you may have. You do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate in this study. If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign the Informed Consent Form. You will be given a copy of both the Participant Information Sheet and the Informed Consent Form to keep. Please make sure you have read and understood all the pages of the Participant Information Sheet.

1. **What is the purpose of the study?**
   This study aims to understand the challenges and opportunities in engaging the Ogbonge Women in the FFH Initiative in Nigeria as well as identifying, reviewing, analyzing, and documenting strategies, systems, and practices that have either supported or undermined Oxfam's engagement with the Ogbonge Women in the implementation of the FFH Initiative in Nigeria.

2. **What will my participation in the study involve?**
   As a stakeholder of the FFH "Ogbonge Women" Initiative, your participation would involve being interviewed in line with the purpose of the study mentioned above. Due to constraints, the interview would be conducted electronically via audiovisual internet-enabled (voice-over internet protocol) platforms such as Skype, Zoom meetings, Google Meet, or WhatsApp video call. If you agree to partake in this study, we can use any of the above-mentioned software that you are most comfortable and familiar with for your interview. With your permission, the interview will be recorded using in-app recording services of the intended platforms (Skype, Zoom, Teams, Google Meet) or screen recording application if you are more comfortable with WhatsApp video calls (as the software has no in-app recording feature). In order not to take up too much of your time, the

maximum duration of the interview would be 60 minutes (1 hour) and any follow up interview (where necessary to clarify ambiguous issues) would be for a maximum of 30 minutes.

3. **What are the possible benefits and risks of this study?**
   The main benefit of the study is that it would help provide an in-depth understanding of the challenges and opportunities involved in the FFH Initiative in Nigeria.
   This study poses no risks, as the researcher would ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of participants personal data.

4. **Do I receive payment for my involvement with the study?**
   There will be no payment for participation in this study as the study is purely explorational to develop engagement strategies that would be beneficial to the Ogbonge Women of the FFH, thereby improving their livelihoods and wellbeing.

5. **What if I feel uncomfortable with an aspect of the study?**
   If you feel uncomfortable at any point in the interview, you are free to withdraw your participation, and data provided will be deleted and will not be used in the study.

6. **What if I do not want to answer a question being asked of me?**
   You are always welcome to decline any questions you are not comfortable with.

7. **What if I do not want to participate in some parts/elements/tests of the study?**
   There is only one part in which you are required to participate in, the interview. If you do not wish to participate, you can freely decline.

8. **What are my rights?**
   You have the right to freely participate or not to participate in the study.

9. **What happens if I change my mind?**
   If you change your mind after the interview, you have a period of five (5) days to withdraw your participation, and your data will not be used in the study. After 5 days post-interview, the researcher would commence the data analysis process and code names will be assigned to every participant and interview session to avoid using personal information in the research. At this point of data analysis, it may be difficult to know who is withdrawing their participation and the exact data to expunge.

10. **What happens after the study?**
    Once the research is completed, all data collected will be transferred to Oxfam and deleted from the researcher's personal password-encrypted computer and external hard drive.

11. **Who do I contact for more information about this study?**
    The researcher.

12. **Who do I contact if I have concerns about the ethics of this research?**
    First the research lead, Dr. Kingsley Onana (kingseyonana@gmail.com) and then Oxfam's TAP2 Project Coordinator, Peggy Maimaji (peggy.maimaji@oxfam.org) when and if the research lead does not address the concerns.

13. **How will my data be stored and for how long?**
    Data collected will be only stored on the personal computer of the researcher, backed up on the researcher's encrypted hard drive, and accessed by the researcher and Oxfam (where necessary), up until the completion of the study, after which the raw data will be deleted.

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Study Title	**Analysis of the Female Food Hero (FFH) Engagement Strategy**
Research Organization	**Oxfam in Nigeria**
Research Lead	**Dr. Kingsley Onana**

Kindly tick the boxes provided by each issue to show that you have read, understood, and agreed:

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated _____ explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	☐
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw in accordance with the explanation offered in the Participant Information Sheet, without giving any reason and without there being any consequences.	☐
I agree to participate in the study via audiovisual internet-enabled (voice-over internet protocol) platforms such as Skype, Zoom meetings, Google Meet, or WhatsApp video call.	☐
I give my consent for the interview sessions to be recorded on Skype, Zoom meetings, or Google Meet (or a third-party screen recording application for WhatsApp video calls) for the purpose of the study.	☐
I understand that my data/responses will be anonymized and any personal or identifying information removed from published materials.	☐
I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymized data/responses as outlined in the Participant Information Sheet.	☐
I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.	☐

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated _____ explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	☐
I understand that the data I provide will be used for the purposes of the research study outlined. I also understand how long my data will be stored for.	☐
I agree to take part in the above research project by way of interview for up to one hour and be available for follow-up interviews of up to 30 minutes, to answer questions in line with my experience as an FFH stakeholder.	☐

Pre-Interview Questions (Respondents' Sociodemographic Details)

- **Gender**
  Male [ ] Female [ ]
- **Age Group**
  18–25 [ ] 26–35 [ ] 36–45 [ ] 46–55 [ ]
  56 years and above [ ] Rather not say [ ]
- **Highest Educational Qualification**
  Primary [ ] Secondary [ ] Graduate [ ] Master [ ]
  Doctorate [ ] Other:_____ Rather not say [ ]
- **Role in the FFH Initiative**
  Beneficiary [ ] Oxfam staff [ ] Partner staff [ ]
  Donor [ ]
  Other (Please specify):_____

_____ _____ _____

Name of Participant **Date** **Signature**
(Or Legal Representative)

_____ _____ _____

Lead Researcher **Date** **Signature**
(Or Legal Representative)

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Study Title	**Analysis of the Female Food Hero (FFH) Engagement Strategy**
Organization	**Oxfam in Nigeria**
Research Lead	**Dr. Kingsley Onana**

Greetings and Introduction

My name is Dr. Kingsley Onana, and I am currently the Research Consultant and Lead Researcher on the FFH study by Oxfam titled above. This research aims to understand the challenges and opportunities in engaging the Ogbonge Women in the FFH Initiative in Nigeria as well as identifying, reviewing, analyzing, and documenting strategies, systems, and practices that have either supported or undermined Oxfam's engagement with the Ogbonge Women in the implementation of the FFH Initiative in Nigeria.

Aim of the Interview

- As outlined in the participant information sheet that I've sent you previously [via phone/ email], the reason behind my interest in interviewing you is related to Oxfam's research on understanding the challenges and opportunities involved in engaging the Ogbonge Women in the FFH Initiative in Nigeria. The research involves getting insights on the situation and prospects of the FFH Initiative in Nigeria from experienced individuals like yourself. Since you are a stakeholder of the FFH Ogbonge Women Initiative in Nigeria, your perspectives on the field would be very contributory to this research.

Interview Ethics

1. Due to time and accessibility constraints, this interview will be conducted electronically via audiovisual internet-enabled platforms such as Skype, Zoom meetings, Google Meet, or WhatsApp video call. If you agree to partake in this study, we can use any of the above-mentioned software that you are most comfortable and familiar with for your interview.
2. Before we begin, I would like to ask for your permission to record the interview using the in-app recording services (of Skype, Zoom, Teams, or Google Meet) or screen recording application if you are more comfortable with WhatsApp video calls (as the software has no in-app recording feature). If you agree, I would then like to ask you to sign the consent form, to approve your willingness for participating in this study and for being recorded.
3. I would like to reassure you that all the experiences, perspectives, and information given during this interview will remain confidential and anonymous. If you feel

uncomfortable with any of the questions to be asked, please feel free to inform me and then we can skip it.

4. I would like also to notify you that if you wanted to add any answers after the interview, please feel free to contact me (via email or phone depending on the initial way of communication).
5. Generally, a transcript will not be provided as it is a confidential interview. Any transcript would be anonymized after the point of interview but you may request a copy before this point within 5 days of the interview.
6. Would you like to ask me any questions before we start the interview?

Interview questions:

Questions for female farmers (Ogbonge Women):

1. **Engagement history**: Can you describe your initial involvement with Oxfam's Female Food Hero initiative? What were the key activities and benefits you experienced?
2. **Engagement strategies**: Can you describe the specific strategies or activities employed by Oxfam to involve women farmers in the FFH Initiative? Which of these strategies were most effective in empowering you?
3. **Challenges**: What challenges have you faced in maintaining your engagement with Oxfam over time? Have there been specific issues or obstacles that affected your participation?
4. **Oxfam's impact**: How have Oxfam's processes (such as training methods, capacity-building approaches) influenced the success of the FFH Initiative from your perspective?
5. **Impact**: How has participation in the FFH Initiative impacted your farming practices, livelihood, and community standing? Can you share any specific examples?
6. **Comparison with other organizations**: Have you engaged with other organizations besides Oxfam? If so, what do these organizations do differently that you prefer or find more effective?
7. **Communication and collaboration**: How would you describe the communication and collaboration between Oxfam and women farmers? Are there ways this can be enhanced or streamlined?
8. **Future aspirations**: What are your hopes and expectations for future partnerships with Oxfam or similar organizations to advance the interests and rights of women farmers?
9. **Improvement suggestions**: Based on your experiences, what areas do you think Oxfam can improve upon to better support and engage with women farmers like yourself?

Questions for Oxfam staff & partners:

1. **Program evolution**: How has the FFH Initiative evolved since its inception in terms of engagement strategies with women farmers?
2. **Challenges and learnings**: What have been the key challenges encountered in sustaining partnerships with women farmers, and what lessons have been learned from these experiences?
3. **Effectiveness of engagement**: How does Oxfam measure the effectiveness of its engagement with female farmers in the FFH program? What indicators or feedback mechanisms are used?

4. **Collaboration**: How does Oxfam collaborate with other organizations working in similar sectors? What are the potential synergies or competition dynamics observed?
5. **Engagement strategies**: Could you outline the key strategies and approaches Oxfam has used to engage with women farmers in the FFH Initiative? Which strategies have yielded the most significant impact?
6. **Internal reflection guide**: How have Oxfam's internal processes (e.g., decision-making structures, resource allocation) affected the effectiveness of engagement with female farmers?
7. **Learning from other organizations**: What practices or approaches from other organizations working in similar sectors have you observed that Oxfam could adopt or adapt to enhance its engagement with women farmers?
8. **Continuous improvement**: In what specific ways does Oxfam seek feedback from women farmers to continuously improve its engagement strategies?
9. **Partnership dynamics**: How does Oxfam collaborate with partner organizations, and what lessons have been learned from these partnerships that could inform future strategies?
10. **Future strategy**: What strategies or improvements do you envision to revitalize and strengthen Oxfam's partnerships with female farmers, considering recent trends and challenges?

Questions for donors:

1. **Impact assessment**: From your perspective, what impact has the FFH Initiative had on promoting women's voices and rights in agriculture?
2. **Engagement sustainability**: What are your observations regarding the sustainability of Oxfam's engagement with female farmers in Nigeria, particularly in the context of donor expectations?
3. **Fundraising insights**: How does the success of initiatives like FFH influence donor confidence and future funding decisions?
4. **Partnership opportunities**: In your view, what role can donors play in supporting Oxfam and similar organizations to enhance sustainable engagement with women farmers?
5. **Comparison with other NGOs**: What aspects of engagement strategies employed by other NGOs or development organizations do you believe are particularly effective or innovative compared to Oxfam?
6. **Capacity building and sustainability**: How does Oxfam's approach to capacity building and sustainability resonate with donor expectations and priorities?
7. **Oxfam's unique value proposition**: What unique value does Oxfam bring to partnerships and initiatives focused on women farmers that differentiate it from other organizations?
8. **Long-term vision**: What do donors see as critical elements for ensuring the longevity and impact of programs like FFH in achieving sustainable development goals?
9. **Recommendations for Oxfam**: Based on your observations and experiences, what recommendations would you provide to Oxfam to optimize its engagement with women farmers and strengthen its impact?

General questions (for all stakeholders):

1. **Perceived value**: What value do you think initiatives like FFH bring to the broader community, beyond direct FFH participants?
2. **Barriers to engagement**: What are the main barriers hindering sustained engagement between organizations like Oxfam and women farmers?
3. **Community impact**: How does the engagement of women farmers through initiatives like FFH contribute to broader community development and food security?
4. **Capacity building**: What are the most effective methods for building the capacity of women farmers to advocate for their rights and influence policy?
5. **Best practices**: What are some best practices you have observed in Oxfam's engagement with women farmers that should be preserved or scaled up?
6. **Internal process impact**: From what you know about Oxfam's internal processes, how do they impact the effectiveness and sustainability of its engagement with female farmers?
7. **Collaboration insights**: From your perspective, what are the key factors that contribute to successful collaboration between Oxfam and women farmers, and how can these be improved?
8. **Learning from competition**: What can Oxfam learn from other organizations that seem to excel in engaging with women farmers or advancing gender equality in agriculture?
9. **Recommendations**: Based on your experiences, what recommendations would you provide to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of Oxfam's engagement with female farmers?
10. **Future vision**: Looking ahead, what transformative changes or innovations would you like to see in Oxfam's approach to engaging with women farmers in Nigeria?

Exit of Interview

- □ Would you like to add any further points before we conclude the interview?
- □ Would it be okay with you if I contacted you later in case further clarification was needed?
- □ Thank you so much for your valuable cooperation, time, and information.

Appendix D: Interview Schedule

S/N	Role	Date Conducted
1	Ogbonge Woman 05	07/12/2024
2	Ogbonge Woman 06	07/12/2024
3	Ogbonge Woman 04	07/13/2024
4	Ogbonge Woman 02	07/13/2024
5	Ogbonge Woman 03	04/25/2024
6	Ogbonge Woman 01	04/25/2024
7	LNGO Partner 02	04/25/2024
8	LNGO Partner 01	04/30/2024
9	Partner at Oxfam International (Funding and Oversight)	04/30/2024
10	Staff 01 (project manager, FFH Initiative)	05/04/2024
11	Staff 02 (project coordinator, Power of Voices at Oxfam)	05/05/2024
12	Staff 03 (project manager, Just Economies at Oxfam)	05/03/2024
13	Staff 04 (finance coordinator at Oxfam)	05/04/2024

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For further information on the issues raised in this paper please email Jessica Chirichetti at Jessica.Chirichetti@oxfam.org or Erick Onduru at Erick.Onduru@Oxfam.org.

The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

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Cover photo: Sarah Ogabi (53), a farmer in Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria, points to a vast plot of land where she plans to build new housing solutions. Her vision combines agricultural work with a commitment to providing shelter for her community. Photo: Maxwell Osarenkhoe/Oxfam

About Oxfam

Oxfam is a global movement of people who are fighting inequality to end poverty and injustice. We are working across regions in more than 70 countries, with thousands of partners, and allies, supporting communities to build better lives for themselves, grow resilience and protect lives and livelihoods also in times of crisis. Please write to any of the agencies for further information or visit www.oxfam.org.

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