

Abstract

Biofortification has received increasing attention as an effective food-based and sustainable approach to addressing micro-nutrient deficiencies in the most deserving of population segments in developing countries. The Building Nutritious Food Baskets (BNFB) is a collaborative project of the CGIAR and FARA seeking to take biofortified crops to scale in African countries, starting with Nigeria and Tanzania. The advocacy component of the project involves national policy influence, nutrition education, social and behavior change communications and, and other promotional activities. This poster outlines the perspectives and strategies for evidence-based regional advocacy on biofortification currently being led by FARA under the BNFB project. Ultimately, the advocacy campaign seeks to position biofortification in the overall human development discourse. More specifically, however, it will help mainstream biofortification in the major agricultural and nutritional policies, frameworks and initiatives at regional level as well as in the revised agricultural investment plans to be developed by countries in the post-Malabo CAADP dispensation

Background

Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the highest prevalence (percentage of population) suffering from hunger and malnutrition. About 23.2 % of the population in this region is undernourished (FAO, 2015). The vast majority of people also suffer micronutrient malnutrition (hidden hunger) in particular, vitamin A, iron and zinc deficiencies. This is because they do not consume enough micronutrients required to lead healthy and productive lives. Biofortification is one of the most cost-effective and sustainable interventions employed in addressing micronutrient malnutrition because it reaches rural consumers who have limited access to industrially fortified foods, supplementation interventions and diverse diets.

Reaching Agents of Change (RAC) Project

Between 2011 and 2014, the International Potato Centre (CIP) and Helen Keller International implemented the Reaching Agents of Change (RAC) initiative that advocated for increased investment in Orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) to combat vitamin A deficiency among young children and women of reproductive age.

Key Advocacy Achievements of RAC

1. Raised more than more US\$ 21.6million in the target countries (Nigeria, Tanzania, Mozambique, Ghana and Burkina Faso) for OFSP initiatives and food-based approaches including biofortified crops.
2. Strengthened the capacity of 11 regional champions to engage and influence key policy makers, governments, private sector and donors to invest in OFSP.
3. Promotion of OFSP was proposed by the African Union for inclusion as a flagship program in the post-Malabo Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) implementation roadmap.
4. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) food and nutrition strategy draft document incorporated food based approaches including biofortified crops.

Key Advocacy Lessons Learnt from RAC

1. Advocacy for reducing micronutrient malnutrition through food-based approaches needs to adopt a holistic approach that situates micronutrients within the food and nutrition security agenda for sub-Saharan Africa.
2. Advocacy for bio-fortification needs to be situated within existing multi-sectoral platforms where key relevant sectors such as health, agriculture, education etc. are already organized, at regional, sub-regional and national levels.
3. Targeting advocacy efforts at existing regional and national agenda and initiatives (public, private sector, civil society organizations and development partners) is crucial for mainstreaming biofortification into agriculture and food systems.
4. Strategic engagement of nutrition advocates and champions working with national and regional institutions (public, private, NGOs, and CBOs) fosters policy alignment and sustainable advocacy networks.

Building Nutritious Food Baskets (BNFB) Project

The success realized as well as the achievements and lessons learnt from the RAC project led to the development of a follow-up project known as Building Nutritious Food Baskets (BNFB). The BNFB explores a scaling-up model through a multi-crop (food basket) approach to addressing hidden hunger by catalyzing sustainable investments for the production and utilization of biofortified crops that are ready for scaling up, viz.: OFSP; vitamin A (yellow) cassava, vitamin A (orange) maize and high iron/zinc beans.

The project mainly targets rural populations, especially young children under the age of five and women of reproductive age, in Nigeria and Tanzania. It is led by the International Potato Center (CIP) and implemented through a consortium of partners comprising CGIAR centers and programs (International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), CIP, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)) and HarvestPlus; governments of Tanzania and Nigeria and other national partners working on nutritious staple crops; and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) that leads the regional advocacy component.

Expected Results from BNFB Advocacy Efforts

1. Biofortified crops mainstreamed in the 2nd generation National Agricultural Investment Plans (NAIPs) of at least 7 countries and Regional Agricultural Investment Plans (RAIPs) of the three sub-Saharan Africa economic communities
2. Biofortification integrated within the other scaling up nutrition efforts at regional and country levels e.g. in the cascaded operational framework of the African Regional Nutrition Strategy (ARNS, 2016 – 2025) and Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement
3. Capacity of regional African champions developed for continued advocacy for biofortification at regional and international levels
4. Developed value chains of biofortified crops
5. Biofortified foods mainstreamed into the daily diets of targeted communities

Expected Impact

The overall impact of BNFB’s advocacy efforts will be demonstrated by a general increase in policy action in the national arenas of food production and nutrition, increased access and intake of biofortified foods that are rich in micronutrient (vitamin A and iron) and increased food and nutrition security at the household level.

References

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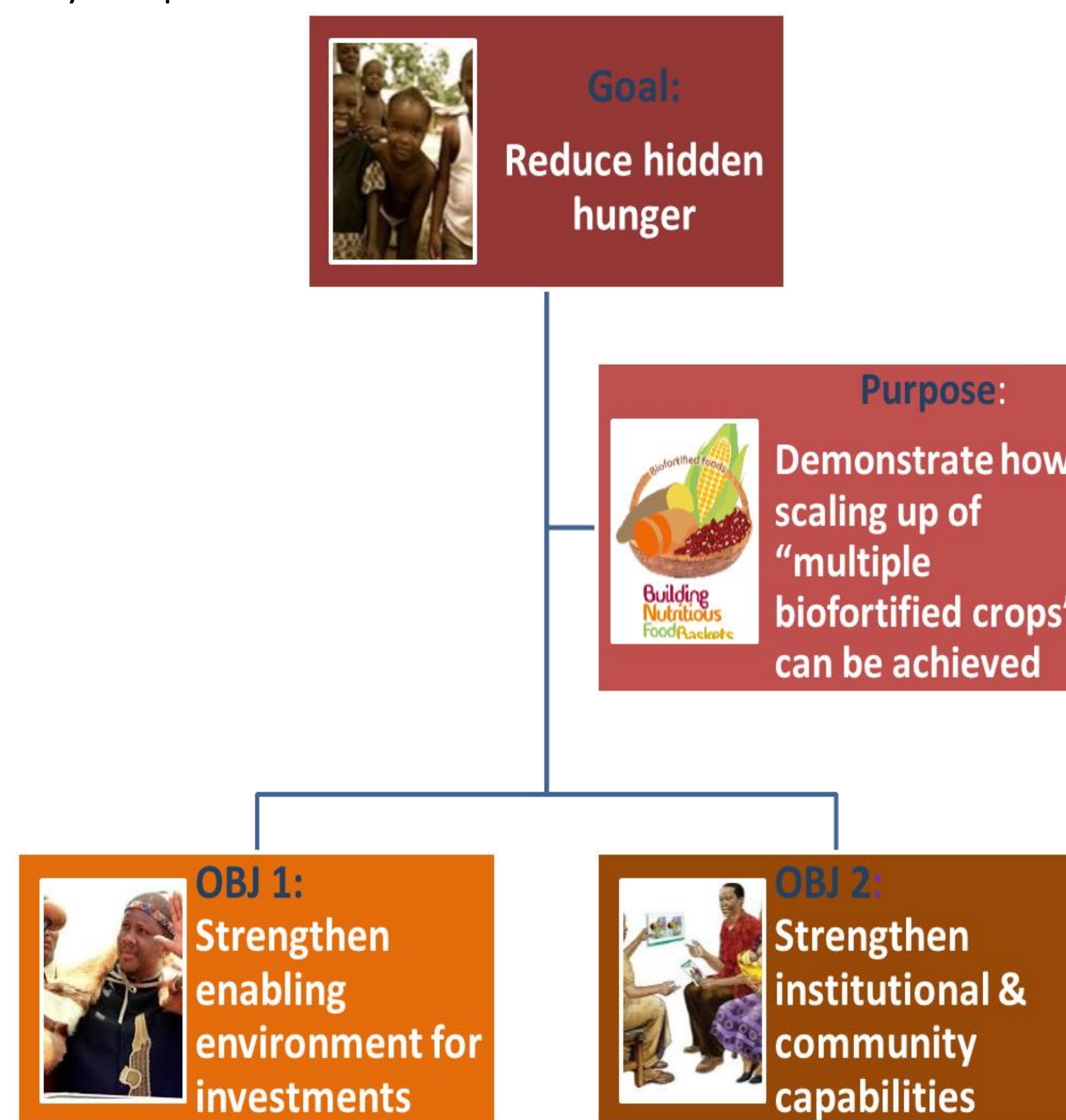


Figure 1: Results hierarchy for the BNFB project

Approach to Advocacy under BNFB

The results hierarchy for the BNFB project is indicated in Fig. 1 above. The project has two main objectives, viz.: 1) strengthen the enabling environment for investments and 2) strengthen institutional & community capabilities. The advocacy component feeds into the first objective and will build on the foundation established by RAC, whilst adding value to ongoing advocacy initiatives at regional, national and community level. A team of carefully selected change agents - advocates (at national level) and champions (at regional level) are being engaged to influence leaders in the fields of agriculture, health, nutrition and education to expand investment in the promotion, production and utilization of the multiple bio-fortified crops.

Key activities include:

1. Identify national advocates and regional champions and develop their capacity for policy engagement.
2. Through Advocacy efforts, ensure that biofortified crops are mainstreamed and prioritized in key national and regional agriculture and nutrition policies, strategies and plans.
3. Added to this, sustaining the biofortification agenda crucially depends on private sector commitment and involvement in biofortification (e.g. through development, production, processing, marketing, and promotion of biofortified foods) and increased nutritional knowledge and changed consumption habits of targeted consumers. Therefore, advocacy efforts will embrace a food system approach and target private sector players to help develop 'nutrition-sensitive' value chains. This will be supported by capacity development efforts and awareness raising to influence positive changes in dietary habits of the target populations.



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