



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
3 January 2020

Original: English

Commission on Population and Development

Fifty-third session

30 March -3 April 2020

Item 3 of the provisional agenda¹

General Debate 3 (a): Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels

3 (b): Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development

Statement submitted by Buddies Association of Volunteers for Orphans, Disabled and Abandoned Children (BAVODAC), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council²

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

¹ E/CN.9/2020/1.

² The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Introduction

Food security and nutritional problems have been the most pressing issues of our time, affecting communities globally. The African continent is particularly vulnerable with the fact that communities of small-scale family farmers continually take up the challenge of food production, and women especially have accepted the role of attempting to manage the food and nutritional security of their families. The enormity of the challenge has also attracted responses from all quarters, including multilateral and bilateral agencies, national and local governments, non-government organizations, universities, research organizations and the private sector. On one hand, extensive research and development has been carried out from endogenous development and food sovereignty perspective that tells us that indigenous food and farming practices contribute to communities' environmental, nutritional, social, cultural and spiritual well-being.

The response has therefore been the mobilization of learning and practice for revitalization of indigenous food systems. On the other hand, the continent is also witnessing massive urbanization and population growth. In response, investors in the agriculture sector are pressing for market-based solutions to the food security challenge. Led by major international agencies and donors, this response calls for transformation of the agricultural landscape on the continent to focus on the economics of increasing production, value addition and the business of agriculture.

Although securing food and nutritional security are the ultimate objectives, these two types of responses have evolved into their ecosystem of actors, supporters and beneficiaries. Operating in different spheres, there has not been enough cross learning to overcome the inherent weaknesses in each of the paradigms. For instance, an indigenous food sovereignty approach has often been weak in learning lessons and developing pragmatic strategies that can improve rural farmers' livelihoods and economic well-being. At the same time, market-led development has often failed to consider rural farmers' world views, skill, assets, indigenous environmental stewardship and ownership over the development process.

How do these approaches work on the ground? What are the choices communities have to make to stay true to economic, equity and environmental criteria? How do communities deal with these issues? How can they be empowered with tools to look at these trade-offs and make informed decisions? Can the approaches complement each other and produce a win-win situation for the benefit of communities?

The Buddies Association of Volunteers for Orphans, Disabled and Abandoned Children (BAVODAC) identifies indigenous food value chains as a potential entry for learning more about how to bridge the endogenous and market-led approaches. Working with other organizations in Special and General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations and other partners for a qualitative, participative action, research initiative, producer-led value chain development and indigenous food revitalization in Cameroon, would develop a learning process and practice to build the capacity of local partner organization.

Addressing food security will require policies that acknowledge the potential nutritive value of indigenous foods, especially in impoverished communities. Indigenous food can contribute to food security, the eradication of hunger and poverty, as well as the prevention of diseases in every locality, be it rural or urban. This can equally be true in an entire community. Where food is abundant in an area, the population there is hardly sick; there is no malnutrition among children, and

people grow healthier. There is sufficient evidence from studies that indigenous foods are consumed by many households, especially in areas where they are available and thus can play an important role in alleviating food insecurity.

Objective and purpose of statement

Buddies Association of Volunteers for Orphans, Disabled and Abandoned Children (BAVODAC) is an international organization in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 2016, based in Cameroon with headquarters in Douala. BAVODAC works in the area of protection and promotion of the right of the child, with the aim to ameliorate the living conditions of little children and teenage mothers, and initiates community development programs and projects. It thus provides shelter, food, health care and education to its targeted populations.

BAVODAC's objective is to fight against child abuse and sexual exploitation by providing its target population with shelter, food, health and education. It plays the role of capacity building through community development programs and works in collaboration with government in promoting policies for the rights of the child. BAVODAC remains a value-based organization, striving for dignity of all in the society. Its current work can be categorized in three interconnected streams:

- Social protection and human rights: BAVODAC takes a rights-based approach to social protection of the most vulnerable groups in the society. The various activities include shelter and psychosocial support for children and women immediately after they become orphans, singled mothers of widowed, followed by their resettlement and securing government support.
- Development programs: Interventions in health (HIV/AIDS and malnutrition), education and vocational training, farming to address food security, and affordable housing. Along with supporting widows and single or teenage mothers, BAVODAC also runs programs to support orphans to go to school by providing logistics and paying school fees; and helping them to acquire skills in dressmaking, carpentry and other trades.
- Economic empowerment of women: Programs in this area include financial inclusion, income generation activities such as petty trading and above all community farming.

Accomplishments

Within the Economic Empowerment Program, one of the most valuable projects BAVODAC has ever embarked on was the program on empowering rural women in creating and managing larger scale cassava farms for a sustainable business in Cameroon through capacity building. This project targeted two villages, Ntui and Ngoro. The aim of this project was to enhance and ameliorate the livelihood of marginalized groups from the community. The organization chose to work on cassava because it is a crop that almost all women in Cameroon do cultivate but in a very small scale. Cassava is consumed in all six countries in Central Africa, and therefore cultivating it in a larger scale opens a door to food security and poverty alleviation which is sustainable development.

Remaining challenges

However, in the course of working in the project, the Organization faced a lot of professional challenges that include:

- Sustainable leadership that responds to the 21st century challenges, especially leading women who had never gone to school. Our members are the widows, single or teenage mothers, women with disabilities and dropouts;
- Entrepreneurial skills: Entrepreneurs need the skills and competencies and a better understanding of the business; women often lack the entrepreneurial skills that can enable them to effectively run their businesses;
- Business education for the entrepreneurs in new agriculture;
- Food processing and conservation.

Expectations

The ultimate aim of this project was to better understand the issue of moving from small scale farming to a larger production for industrialization or commercialization. BAVODAC initiated this program to create awareness that farming is not only a matter of securing food for the family, but to yield money as well. Furthermore, this also leads to possible social enterprise.

Recommendation

It should be noted that the key recommendation was to strengthen the women to move from subsistence farming to agribusiness using sustainable agriculture.

Closing statement

Sustainable development is defined as a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is often described as being built on three, equally important pillars; social, environmental and economic. It should be noted that, to have a sustainable future, the needs of people, including peasant farmers, must be met equally. Needs are things like medical care, suitable housing, food and sanitation. Additionally, people will want to have as high a standard of living as possible and this must be achieved in a way that does not harm or exploit others. Sustainable human activities look to protect the earth's environment to make sure it is not damaged for future generations. This remains a common challenge among rural persons in developing countries where they destroy the soil by burning grasses and deforestation. Our goal is to transform the farmers by improving their capacity in technological innovation in farming.
