

Bridging best practises in fura processing and marketing amongst Fulanis in northern Nigeria



1. Pioneer partnership

The sorghum pilot with the Funtua Women Processors in northern Nigeria (Katsina State) was aimed at breaking the cultural barriers of Fura processing and marketing by the local Fulani. The pilot was meant to support and induce adoption of best practises among Fura processors in the Funtua community. The pilot was started in 2016/2017 and was part of the sorghum public private partnership (PPP) with Nestle Nigeria Limited.

2SCALE wanted to tackle the challenges of local Fura processing and marketing from a two-fold perspective; fact that Fulanis prepare Fura and sell under very unhygienic conditions and grounded in cultural believes. The Fulani women sold fresh cow milk (“Nunu”) and Fura under unhygienic circumstances. They were selling from the ground and using unwholesome calabash and wooden ladles. The whole hurdle for this pilot was a battle of behavioural warfare.

The second issue was the fact that Katsina (Funtua) happens to be a Muslim dominated area and women (married) were not allowed to engage in retailing. In order to bridge gaps, a strategy was developed to create a Fura ball supply role for Funtua Muslim women, while the men and Fulani women does the retailing. The Fulani women could engage in selling and they do so especially during major market days in various locations in Funtua.

2. Replicable practice

As a result of cultural and religious barriers, the Funtua women (married) processors of Katsina state were not allowed by their husbands to sell their product on the market. Instead, their children were selling the product. This meant that our plans to actively engage the Funtua women in the marketing activities got stalled. Faced with this situation, we built a new distribution model targeting Fulani (women) Fura sellers with focus on changing behaviours. In this model, we also included male grocery sellers as marketers as it was still perceived as difficult to change and adopt new and hygienic innovations by the Fulani women. However, a common and huge challenge with both channels (Fulani women and male grocery shops) was lack of hygiene.

To implement the distribution model, we held series of behavioural change and business trainings on food processing, handling and marketing for Fulani women and male grocery owners. The training helped women to identify what is right and how to attain that in terms of food processing hygiene and point of sales with respect to potential consumer formed perceptions. The next major step, which proved to be the breakthrough was the selection of Fulani women as “change agents”. Four change agents were recruited by based on their enthusiasm and activeness during trainings. The change agents became key drivers for several targeted promotions towards consumers and penetration into the Fulani communities to influence other Fulani women towards joining group and adoption of best practises. In addition, 2SCALE involved a senior community extension from Federal Government in Funtua who was well trusted within the community. He was strategically involved to convince the husbands of the Fulani women to allow their wives join group and learn new practises. The involvement of the extension agent gave a strong drive for the rapid expansion of the new Fura women sales group. The Fulani sellers embraced the new model of sale of Fura and were able to double their sales. As a result of 2SCALE intervention, significant numbers of Fulanis in the local markets where marketing activities took place (73%) adopted the use of simple hand operated manual machine for blending and sale of Fura instead of the traditional calabash on the ground approach. Male groceries were branded to enhance visibility and customer traffic in the community. The efficiency in service delivery for both Fulani women and grocery shops increased drastically according to them. They could now serve a more improved, hygienic Fura drink to more people at a time than previous. They did not also have any hand contact with the Fura as pertained initially. The machine which was new in the community has now been embraced with Fulanis selling from tables instead of the ground. This pilot was a build-up / replica of a similar one implemented by 2SCALE project in the Sorghum & Millet in the Sahel (SMS) project in Jigawa State (Kafin Hausa LGA), Nigeria.

To summarize, this practice is addressing constraints in terms of:

Inclusion

Availability: The pilot contributed to the wholesomeness (hygiene) of the Fura drink at the point of sale. It introduced a cheap, manually operated machine for mixing Fura and “Nunu” (fresh cow milk) into Fura drink. It also improved the delivery time in terms of speed and efficiency on two channels – groceries point in the communities and Fulani saleswomen, mostly in the local markets. This integrated channel approached ensured easy access to Fura drink and at high efficiency in terms of customer service delivery time management.

Affordability: Affordability was well catered for. The Fura was produced in various ball sizes and also served to customers in various package types and sizes (i.e., washable bowls, plastic rubbers and cups).

Acceptability: Initially, even after the behavioural training that demonstrated pictorially bad and good practices around food hygiene and handling, women were quite hesitant. It was during the demonstration sessions with agents in the Fulani communities on the use of the manual mixer that interest shot up. Both Fulani sellers and consumers were really fascinated about how the new approach worked. Buyers inclined to initially few Fulani adopters that were using the manual mixing machine and that also triggered other sellers to switch from old and traditional practice of selling from the ground.

3. Preconditions for replication

Under the condition of this pilot and very similar conditions, the following will be the pre-conditions to propel a functioning support for the intended project or pilot.

Strong Insight or Market Research

The circumstance we faced in the implementation of this pilot was one of serious setbacks related to tradition, religion and formed lifestyle over years. Changing people behaviour, especially indigenous and illiterate rural folks can never be taken lightly. There is therefore a need for detailed information seeking. Secondly, this is important in order not to falter with any prescribed traditions and be culturally sensitive to the community and its inhabitants.

Culture Sensitivity

Project lead on the pilot or project should be well briefed and learn about the locality culture and norms. You have to respect and be sensitive to their beliefs and practices and carry out implementation with tact. Example, Funtua is an Islamic community and women based on religious grounds are barred from undertaking so many things. You have to follow appropriate rules in working with them and also respect key rules (i.e., Sharia courts and Islamic laws pertaining to the states).

Engage in Deep Stakeholder Involvement

Do a mapping of the stakeholders who really matter in the successful implementation of the pilot and engage them very well. The engagement will shape your strategy, understanding and sensitive issues. A pilot of this nature with heavy behaviour change content means that multi-faceted knowledge is required from diversified stakeholder sources to enrich pilot / project strategy.

Mastery in the Delivery of Behavioural Training

Beyond getting the broader framework of the pilot in place, central to the success of this pilot was ensuring a good and effective behavioural training. Secondly, having an experience in community entry practices and product or service innovation adoption procedures.

4. Results Achieved

A significant number of Fulani women (73%) we worked with and operate their selling business in the local markets switched from their previous on the ground selling to adoption our 2SCALE innovation. This way a major feat attained in the implementation of the pilot. Six (6) grocery outlets were branded to increase visibility and linked to a number of schools in the community to extend their sales points. A total number of over 45 Fulani women were reached with hygienic, more improved, and efficient mode of operating and selling Fura drink in the local markets in Funtua, Nigeria.

Want to know more?

In case of further information on this pilot, please contact Kwame Ntim Pipim (Senior BoP Marketing Specialist) on kpipim@2scale.org. You can also refer to the link below for other information related to Funtua Women Processors- Nigeria.

- <https://www.2scale.org/fr/updates/breaking-cultural-barriers-in-fura-processing-and-marketing-in-northern-nigeria-fr>

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