

FARMING FIRST

Speaking notes

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Mr. Chairman, your excellencies, and honoured delegates,

Slide 1 - INTRODUCTION

I have travelled from a place where we do not yet have a paved road to this city of concrete. In my home, peasant farming accounts for 80% of our economic activity and involves the cultivation of maize, cassava, and peanuts on a seasonal trend. Less than 10% of the population is engaged in formal employment and the overall literacy levels are under 35%.

To address these challenges, we have been working to improve the living standards of the people in our area through an integrated community-based program that facilitates quality education, health and nutrition through agricultural development.

Slide 2 – BACKGROUND

The reality in my community - Manyinga – an area of 60,000 people in the North Western Province of Zambia mirrors much of reality in my country. 85% of Zambians are engaged in Agriculture and 75% People live below Poverty Level, and 60% of Land Cultivated By Small Scale Farmers.

Slide 3 – COMMON CAUSES

So it absolutely follows that to address the challenges of household food insecurity you must look at the local level and the issues that farmers face. There are many causes but let me highlight a few this morning:

- Dependency on rain-fed crops
- Lack of diversification techniques
- Lack of appropriate and affordable technology for cultivation
- Lack of food processing techniques

Slide 4 – HOLISTIC SOLUTIONS

There are many causes of food insecurity and we believe they require holistic solutions. Farmers require three things to do their job:

- Natural resources like land and water – we are very lucky in our community that access to land is not a limiting factor
- Knowledge – proper training on existing techniques and best practices can help, especially in the legacy of talents lost to AIDS
- Local access – to inputs and micro-credit

With these things, farmers can grow a crop.

Then those crops must be protected, and fair markets obtained. All of that system can be made better through continued research, especially on small scale farming needs.

Based on my experience as a farmer, if any of these requirements are not met, agricultural development cannot be sustainable and address the long term issues of poverty.

Slide 5 - **OVERALL GOAL**

With this in mind, our community created a project to promote household food security in Zambia through poverty reduction initiatives such as sustainable agricultural development.

Slide 6 - **OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES**

Our operational objectives are:

1. To facilitate food security methods through diversified farming practices by 2020 in Manyinga community.
2. To improve nutritional status of the vulnerable people (women, children, PLWA) by 2020 in the target communities.
3. To seek for economic, technical and material empowerment for small scale farmers in the community by 2020 thereby ensuring sustainable agricultural practices.

Slide 7 – **BENEFICIARIES**

In particular we are trying to focus on special beneficiaries:

- Small Scale Farmers
- Vulnerable Children and Women
- People with Disabilities
- Community at Large

In total, 22 different groups are involved in our trust.

Slide 8 – **MANYINGA COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PROCESSES**

1. Mobilization of community stakeholders.

2. Identification of problems leading to vulnerability and planning together.
 3. Ongoing capacity building.
- TOPICS

- a. Resource mobilization
- b. Volunteerism
- c. Gender equality&equity
- d. Sustainability (Access subsidised inputs)

Slide 9 – **RESULTS**

Thus far, we are seeing some positive preliminary results. And though there are many, many more things we must accomplish, thus far we have had:

- Increase in community income levels by 5-10%
- Gradual reduction in GRZ food supplements to community households (reduced dependency).
- About 40% increase in maize production.
- Improved pupil class performance particularly where the programme runs.

Slide 10 – **LESSONS LEARNT**

Along the way, I believe we have learned some things. **MOST IMPORTANTLY, IT MUST BE A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH.**

1. Community members need full participation in:
 - gap identification
 - planning
 - implementation
2. A successful community household food security initiative must lead to:
 - ✓ *ownership*
 - ✓ *sustainability*
3. Each stage of development work builds on the other.

Slide 11 – **WAY FORWARD**

As we plan the future activities for our program, as resources allow, we would like to work on holistic solutions to the resources needed to farm, and to make use of those crops. There are many activities we would like to undertake and our priorities include:

- **INTRODUCE SMALL SCALE IRRIGATION**
- Increase agricultural training and use best practices
- **DIVERSIFY FARMS, INCLUDING FISH FARMING**
- Access to quality inputs
- **ADD MICRO-CREDIT SCHEMES**
- secure community food processing facilities
- incorporate storage

- link to markets
- **SCALE UP COMMUNITY/SCHOOL NUTRITION AND FIELD TRAINING PROGRAMMES**
- Scale up to other communities

Slide 12 – **RECOMMENDATIONS**

So as you can see, there are many interlinkages between all the elements of programming for sustainable rural development. However, from the perspective of a farmer in one of the Least Developed Countries, here are three of the most important things governments and the UN could do:

- 1) Subsistence farmers need to be empowered to become small scale entrepreneurs to enhance food security.
Remember, **BIG FARMERS WERE ONCE SMALL FARMERS.**
- 2) Programming needs to be local. Rural areas must be a priority for poverty eradication efforts.
- 3) Direct engagement of farmers and farmer organisations is essential. Multi-lateral programmes alone can't transform communities.

Governments are part of the solution but donors must realise that the most impact comes from “on the ground” work.