

EatSafe: Evidence and Action Towards Safe, Nutritious Food

Story Sourcing in Birnin Kebbi, Nigeria

March 2021



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This EatSafe report presents evidence that will help engage and empower consumers and market actors to better obtain safe nutritious food. It will be used to design and test consumer-centered food safety interventions in informal markets through the EatSafe program.

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ACRONYMS

Below is a list of all acronyms and abbreviations used in the report.

COVID – Coronavirus Disease (2019-nCoV)

GAIN – Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition

ILRI – International Livestock Research Institute

PM – Pierce Mill Entertainment & Education

SBCC – Social and Behavior Change Communication

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2021, Story Scouts sourced stories amongst informal food market vendors in three markets in the city of Birnin Kebbi in northwest Nigeria. Story Sourcing is the semi-formal process that uses journalistic techniques to gather stories directly from the audience of interest. These stories will be used to create resonant and culturally relevant media interventions that integrate food safety messages and behaviors.

In Birnin Kebbi markets, three Story Scouts conducted 61 in-depth interviews with various food vendors. From these interviews, they selected 24 (eight each) stories to write up. Scouts interviewed primarily Hausa men and women aged 18-70 years old who sold a wide variety of foods, including staple grains, vegetables, meat, fish, and oils.

The Story Sourcing approach focused on gathering stories about different aspects of the lives of food vendors. The result was a multi-faceted montage of their world and the discovery of several themes which emerged from their stories, including service to others, resilience and motivation, women in the market, learning from errors, occupational hazards, pride and success, religious norms and values, seizing market advantage, and reliance on the government for business help.

These stories and the themes therein will guide the development of resonating media programs that feature food safety messages and behaviors (e.g., SBCC media such as radio dramas, videos used in training, etc.).

INTRODUCTION

USAID’s Feed the Future’s *Evidence and Action Toward Safe and Nutritious Food* (EatSafe) is a five-year collaborative agreement implemented by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), the International Livestock and Research Institute (ILRI), and Pierce Mill Entertainment & Education (PM). A key objective of EatSafe is investigating what role consumer demand can have to improve food safety in informal markets in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). As such, EatSafe has two primary audiences: the consumer and the informal market vendor, both of whom play critical roles in improving food safety.

The EatSafe Story Sourcing activity (1.8) is formative research executed in support of designing EatSafe interventions, in particular around interventions focusing on food vendors. In January of 2021, PM executed fieldwork for the Story Sourcing activity among food vendors in three markets in Birnin Kebbi, Nigeria: Central Market, Yaryara Market, and Toshon Kasuwa Market.

What is Story Sourcing

Story Sourcing is a semi-formal, journalistic process conducted by Story Scouts using in-depth interviews to gather stories directly from the target audience—in this case, informal market food vendors. These stories will be used to inform the design and production of various types of media-based programs as part of the larger EatSafe intervention.

The heart of the Story Sourcing process is the people whose behavior the program seeks to influence. Intervention design is guided by speaking with vendors to gather stories from their life experiences to use as building blocks to construct resonant, entertaining, and culturally relevant media programs (e.g., SBCC media such as radio dramas, videos used in training, etc.). The aim, in part, is to prevent assumptions and stereotypes and to ultimately create stories that genuinely connect to the people whose behavior the program is trying to change. *Story Sourcing is predicated on the idea that each cultural context yields different stories that have the potential to influence and impact the behavior of that specific audience.*

Why Stories?

An extensive body of evidence shows how narrative communications (or stories) can have an impact on social, behavioral, and health outcomes of a group of people. It’s not surprising then that development interventions have intentionally been using them in that manner for nearly six decades (Sood et al., 2017). The use of stories is particularly evident in entertainment-education programs that weave key messages and behaviors into compelling soap operas, radio dramas, TV show, videos, songs, and community theater aimed at changing expectations, behaviors, and norms (Orozco-Olvera et al., 2019; Singhal et al., 2004).

It follows then that understanding *how* stories can impact behavior is important to developing effective interventions, and there is an increasing body of work exploring those mechanisms (e.g. Shaffer, 2018). Researchers have identified several key mechanisms within narratives that help lead to behavior change, of which story immersion and character identification guide the design and objectives of Story Sourcing. (1) **Story immersion** (or transportation) is the mechanism wherein an audience is “transported” into the world of the story and, as a result, might be more willing to accept messages delivered through the story (Green & Brock, 2000). (2) **Character identification** is a narrative mechanism related to a connection between the audience and a character(s) in a story. Although there are many attributes woven into the idea of character identification, Story Sourcing leans heavily on Cohen’s (2001) conceptualization which suggests that character identification revolves around an empathetic connection related to “sharing the perspective of the character [and] feeling with the character” (p.251).

Story Sourcing then provides clues as to what kinds of stories might be immersive for this particular audience and what kinds of characters they might identify with. By speaking directly with the audience, we are able to capture glimpses of their motivations, aspirations, fears, hopes, and longings and uncover stories that demonstrate how those feelings play out in action. These can often be found in the answers to broad cultural and sociological questions. For example, in Birnin Kebbi these questions included: what are the economic, political, and/or family dynamics that influence a vendor’s behavior? Are there any cultural touchpoints that are important and why? How does religion influence the vendor’s life? Folklore? What are the various perceptions, beliefs, and superstitions within the vendor community? Where do vendors get their news? How do they manage their money? How do they raise capital? Such questions can lead to insightful personal stories and anecdotes about the target audience.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for executing Story Sourcing in Birnin Kebbi, Nigeria is rooted in the Story Sourcing Guide (Appendix 1). As noted in the guide, the first step is to localize the methodology for any given location. Below, we outline the specific and localized methodology used to execute Story Sourcing in Birnin Kebbi.

Implementing Story Sourcing in Birnin Kebbi

In October of 2020, PM commissioned an anthropologist to prepare an overview of Birnin Kebbi (Appendix 2). This first step provided PM with a broad contextual understanding of the location, the people, and the general market dynamics. With this baseline understanding of Birnin Kebbi,

PM defined specifications for Story Scouts' credentials and background and objectives of their assignment. After Scouts were hired, we collaborated with them to finalize the localized process.

With consideration to the size of the selected Birnin Kebbi markets, the general scope of the project, and our aim to have a diversity of journalistic voices, PM sought out three Story Scouts amongst Nigerian journalists who met the below criteria:

1. **Native Hausa speaker.** It was essential that Scouts were native speakers of Hausa, the dominant language in Birnin Kebbi, in order to develop a rapport with market vendors and allow them to naturally open up in an interview. In addition to this, the Hausa dialect spoken in Kebbi State is quite different from standard Hausa, as spoken in Abuja. Ideally, all Scouts could speak the Kebbi dialect.
2. **Contextual knowledge of market environment and vendors.** It was important that selected journalists had an understanding of the market and the vendors and were all intimately familiar with the local culture and cultural norms and included male and female representation.
3. **Strong English language skills.** It was important that PM and potentially other EatSafe global partners could easily communicate with the Scouts. It was also expected that the final report prepared by Scouts would be written in English.
4. **Reasonable and fair daily rate.**
5. **Strong past performance.** We sought Scouts who had demonstrated strong journalistic experience within northern Nigeria, including interviewing experience.
6. **Competent writing skills.** It was important that Scouts communicate in their own style the core of the stories they would find. (It was less important to us that the written story be "publishable" than for it to capture the essence of the vendor's story and experience.)
7. **Positive References.** It was important for us to learn about the work style and work quality from the Scout's past journalistic assignments.

To locate scouts, PM placed the consultancy announcement and targeted ads on LinkedIn and Hot Nigerian Jobs, which is one of the largest job boards in Nigeria. We also reached out to an extensive network of journalists, including those affiliated with the BBC World Service, BBC Hausa, Voice of America, National Public Radio, Vox, The Wall Street Journal, The Pulitzer Centre for Investigative Journalism, Rural Reporters, Premium Times, and the Daily Trust.

60 people applied. After initial scanning of the applicants, we remotely interviewed 13. This process yielded a number of qualified candidates.

To choose which journalists to hire as Scouts, we were guided by our interest in bringing different perspectives to the process.

Kebbi State sits in an Islamic region in northern Nigeria where genders are often separated in various aspects of social life (Casey, 2008). Consequently, it was important that at least one Scout be a Hausa woman who could more easily gather genuine stories from female vendors.

In addition, we wanted to collaborate with at least one journalist from Birnin Kebbi who was natively familiar with the local markets and with at least one journalist who had a significant byline with major news networks (e.g. BBC World Service). Finally, we were interested in collaborating with Scouts of various ages.

Taking these factors into consideration, the final Scouts hired to execute Story Sourcing were Mustapha Muhammad, Aishatu Madina Maishanu, and Abdullahi Ibrahim (Figure 1).

Mustapha Muhammad, Kano, Nigeria: For over two decades, Mr. Muhammad has been a stringer for BBC World Service, Bloomberg, and Radio France International, and he currently serves as CEO of Quick Action Media Nigeria. He has authored hundreds of articles focused on Northern Nigeria. He is a native Hausa speaker and has extensive experience in interviewing and talking with sources. He holds a masters from Bayero University in mass communications and development. He brings a wealth of journalistic experience specifically in Northern Nigeria.

Aishatu Madina Maishanu, Abuja, Nigeria: A native of Sokoto, (which is the same ethnic group as Kebbi), Ms. Maishanu was an international broadcaster with Voice of America (VOA) in Washington, DC for a year and a half ending in October 2020. Before returning to Nigeria, she reported the news for the VOA Hausa service and oversaw all VOA Hausa digital media platforms (including websites and social media handles). Aisha has also worked at BBC World Service as a Broadcast Journalist creating digital content. She holds a degree in Mass Communication from Ahmadi Bello University in Zaria.

Abdullahi Ibrahim, Birnin Kebbi, Nigeria: A native of Sokoto, Nigeria and long-time resident of Birnin Kebbi, Mr. Ibrahim currently serves as the general manager of Vision FM 92.9, one of the two primary radio stations serving Kebbi State. Prior to this role, he worked as communications consultant for UNICEF projects on malaria prevention, for the USAID-funded Compass Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) Program, and for FHI360.

Figure 1. Birnin Kebbi Story Scouts Bios

Story Scouts targeted market vendors in Birnin Kebbi's selected markets, 18 years of age or older, able to give their consent to be interviewed, and who sold food such as grains, vegetables, meat, fish, and ready to eat foods.

Taking into consideration the size of the selected markets and the need for each Scout to develop relationships with vendors to draw out stories, each Scout was tasked with conducting in-depth interviews with at least 20 market vendors over the span of roughly 10 days. Based on these

interviews, each Scout was responsible to write up stories from eight of the vendors, resulting in 24 written stories from Birnin Kebbi. PM asked that each story be between 400-700 words long. The aim was to capture the essence of a story, not to write a piece ready for publication in a periodical.

Of the 24 written stories, we set a target for 5-8 of the stories to be about women, as preliminary research indicated that the majority of established vendors were men.

Each Scout was asked to complement their story collections with photos and videos of the interviewees, the market, and the general environment.

To support the work of the Scouts, PM, through GAIN Nigeria, established a relationship with the market leadership. The names and profiles of the three Scouts were shared with the leadership in December, and PM secured permission of the market leaders for the Scouts to conduct their field work in the selected three markets. In addition, GAIN Nigeria provided contact information for all local leadership and Scouts were encouraged to make connections with them prior and during their fieldwork.

Each Scout worked with PM to define questions that would serve as starting points for conversations with vendors. A sampling of the initial questions is found in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Sampling of Initial Interview Questions

- How did you start with this trade?
- What are the things you need to improve or expand your businesses?
- Which of your life achievements are you most proud of?
- How does the business impact your life and life of your family?
- What was the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown on your businesses?
- What informed your choice of business?
- What can you recall from your first day in this business?
- Did you ever feel like changing businesses and why?
- What other challenges do you face in this business?
- Is any member of your family partaking in this business?
- Is there any popular traditional song/poem or joke shared about this business?

Scouts executed their Story Sourcing assignment in January of 2021. Once in the field, Scouts surveyed the markets and approached vendors in a way they deemed most appropriate and

effective to develop a relationship with the vendor and to secure consent for the interview and photos. Consent forms were written in Hausa. Scouts read consent forms to those that were illiterate and asked them to mark an “X” on the signature line.

As Scouts were interviewing vendors during the workday, they compensated them for their time with a 500-naira phone credit recharge card.

Finally, following Covid-19 precautions, Scouts wore face masks, provided face masks to interviewees, conducted all interviews outside, and to the extent possible kept at least a two-meter distance from interviewees.

Using a printed interview form, Scouts collected the following information about each interviewed market vendor: market where he/she sold food items, GPS coordinates, name, phone number, gender, tribe, age, town of residence, food sold, and media consumption habits (Appendix 3). Scouts were asked to transfer this information regularly to PM via an online Google Form along with scanned signed consent forms, audio files of the interviews, story summaries, and photos/videos via Dropbox. PM reviewed the submissions as they arrived to ensure information was collected properly and consistently.

RESULTS

Profile of interviewed vendors

Scouts interviewed a variety of vendors (Table 1). Collectively, Scouts interviewed 61 vendors who met the inclusion criteria. Most of the interviewed vendors (36%) sold food at the Central Market, followed by Tsohon Kasuwa (28%) and Yaryara (23%) markets, which are significantly smaller. The majority of vendors were Hausa (84%) and residents of Birnin Kebbi (67%). One third (31%) of interviewed vendors were women. Over half of interviewed vendors (52%) were between ages of 31 and 50. Interviewed vendors sold a variety of food types, often not specializing in only one commodity. Most of the vendors interviewed sold rice and grains, vegetables, and meat and poultry.

Aisha Maishanu interviewed market vendors between January 7th and 15th (9 days). Abdul Ibrahim conducted the field work between January 12th and 23rd (12 days). Mustapha Muhammad executed Story Sourcing between January 14th and 22nd (9 days).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Interviewed Vendors (n=61)

Market where vendor sells food		
Central Market	22	36%
Tsohon Kasuwa Market	17	28%
Yarvara Market	14	23%
Areas adjacent to markets	8	13%
Town of residence		
Birnin Kebbi	41	67%
Other	20	33%
Gender		
Male	42	69%
Female	19	31%
Tribe		
Hausa	51	84%
Igbo	4	6.5%
Other	4	6.5%
Fulani	2	3%
Vendor Age		
31-50	32	52%
51+	18	30%
18-30	11	18%
Food sold (often more than one commodity was sold by the vendors)		
Rice and grains	12	20%
Vegetables	12	20%
Meat and poultry	10	16%
Fish	8	13%

Other (cola nut, locust beans, peanut dumplings, gum arabic, moringa leaves, cassava, potatoes, spices, palm oil, milk)	22	36%
Can vendor easily stream videos on his/her phone?		
No	46	75%
Yes	15	25%
What is vendor's most preferred way of getting news and entertainment?		
Radio	45	74%
TV	5	8%
Other people	5	8%
Mobile apps	4	8%
Movies (DVDs)	2	3%
Newspaper	0	-
What other ways are used to get news and entertainment?		
Radio	45	73%
TV	26	42%
Movies (DVD)	18	29%
Other people	14	23%
Mobile apps	13	21%
Newspaper	5	8%

Figure 3. Radio and Cellphone use among Interviewed Vendors

To get anecdotal information on how to best reach market vendors during Phase II media interventions, Scouts were tasked with asking vendors about their media consumption preferences. These questions revealed interviewed vendors' strong preference for radio. 74% of vendors stated that radio is their most preferred way of receiving news and entertainment, with newspapers being the least preferred option. Vendors access radio through their cell phones. Often, they gather in certain vendor stalls when it is time to listen to the news. As one Scout put it, "They do not joke with their radios."

To watch television, you need a steady electricity supply or satellite dish, but for radio, vendors use their small phone or transistor radio. Still, some interviewed vendors indicated they also get news and entertainment via TV and movies, suggesting that visual media could be an option as part of EatSafe intervention.

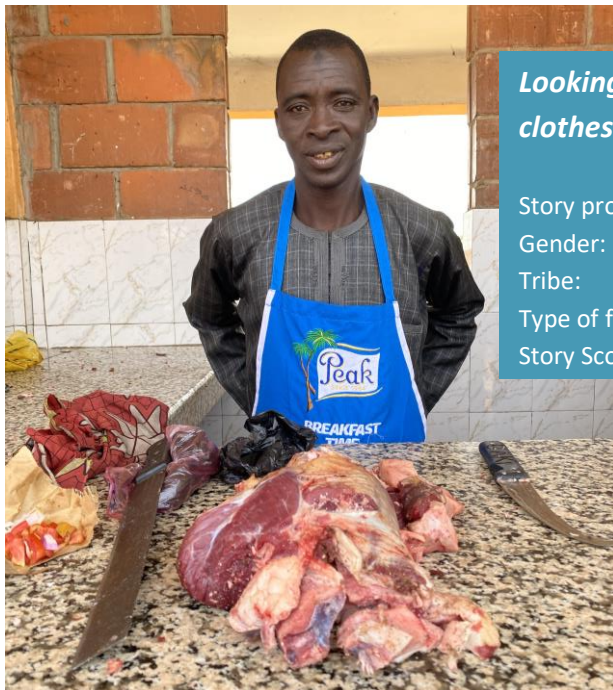
It also became clear that most interviewed vendors do not use smartphones to access media, with 76% of vendors stating they cannot stream internet on their phone. Scouts observed that the vendors use phones, but not smartphones. A few vendors, most of them younger, use cell phones to access social network i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc

Stories from Birnin Kebbi

The stories presented here are grouped by themes, which emerged from the stories the Scouts submitted:

- Stories of learning from errors
- Stories of women in the market
- Stories of service to others
- Stories of resilience and motivation
- Stories of occupational hazards
- Stories of reliance on government for business help

Stories of learning from errors



Looking good: Meat seller discovers the power of clean clothes and a clean stall.

Story protagonist:	Faruk S Fawa (41)
Gender:	male
Tribe:	Hausa
Type of food sold:	raw beef
Story Scout:	Aisha Madina Maishanu

Neatness and fashion as a tool to lure customers is an uncommon skill used by few like Faruk S Fawa in Kebbi's Central Market.

It can be surprising to see how neat and dapper he looked: he is a butcher after all. Despite working with raw beef, the entire day, his clothing was unstained. He had an extra garment he wore on top of his attire to stay clean.

When asked about this, Faruk laughed and told the story of one customer who changed his life forever by giving him some simple advice. Faruk explained how he had always been an unclean

young man. He never thought it was an issue because he sold raw meat and his garments would get dirty after working in the market.

A few years ago, Faruk met a certain customer who always complained to him of how he looked and smelled. She said, "Faruk, I only buy your meat because you offer the best prices in the market, but I cannot stand the way you look."

Faruk did not think anything of what she said. One day, the lady and her entire household fell sick. Faruk still did not think much of the sickness but went to visit her at home to see how she was.

It was not until he got calls from three of his customers telling him about their declining health, that he suspected it had something to do with his meat. Faruk started getting worried and that is when he called the disease control center in Kebbi to come and check his stall.

He was shocked after what they revealed to him. Faruk's lack of cleanliness has been affecting his workspace and the meat he sells. Apparently, his workspace was so dirty that the meat he sold was becoming contaminated and causing food poisoning.

Soon, the story of him spreading food poisoning went viral. Faruk had to quit his job. He began to reflect on how to get his customer base back.

When his customers got better, he summoned the courage to go beg for their forgiveness, and he promised to win them back as his customers.

That is how Faruk's neatness started. He became the neatest meat seller in Kebbi's central market and gained many customers because of his cleanliness and dapper looks. To this day, Faruk always wears a white garment.

"I realized my mistakes, and I am happy and proud of the neat man I have become today. Cleanliness should be one of the most important factors a market trader should consider while doing business."



From six naira and a cup of porridge to 40K a day: Bale Sue on mastering the craft of cleaning cow heads.

Story protagonist:	Bala Sule (43)
Gender:	male
Tribe:	Hausa
Type of food sold:	meat, barbecue, sticks and meat flakes
Story Scout:	Abdullahi Ibrahim

When meat vendors kill their animals, they take the heads, legs and tails to Bala Sule to clean them up. Bala has been doing this for 21 years.

Cleaning cow heads requires burning and cleaning the hair off, washing then, and then splitting them into pieces. It takes roughly 30 minutes to clean an average sized cow head, legs and tail.

In an average day, Bala works up to 13 hours to prepare 40 cow heads. During festivities such as the Muslim Eid when lots of animals are slaughtered, Bala cleans between 40 to 60 heads.

As a young man, he started as a wheelbarrow pusher, transporting animal heads from the old abattoir to the market under a Master [Malam Dan Mudi] who was a cow head trader. The Master paid Bala six naira and a cup of porridge [fura] a day for this work.

In time, Baba secured a job as a cow head cleaner and was able to move on from pushing wheelbarrows. Bala was pleased by this and had been hoping for it, as there is more business potential as a head cleaner.

In his new position, he worked from 7am to 7pm daily, but his pay increased 10-fold, from six to 60 naira a day. He was much happier in this job and did it for several months before his next promotion to head butcher, receiving 100 naira per cow head.

He recalled his first experience as head butcher when he was handed a cow head. At that point he did not appreciate the difference between a cow's head and an ox's head, other than one is a female's and the other a male's head. Cleaning a cow head does not require nearly as much heat as that of an ox. He learned this by burning his first cow head beyond skin level. Next, he could

not split the head open. It was too strong. He had to ask for some help. It was then that he learned that the skin of a cow is softer, but the bones are much stronger. Over time he learned by watching how his seniors handled the cow heads.

According to Bala his new job is not without hazards. It requires that he stands close to the fire throughout the day. Five years ago, it led him to inhale dangerous smoke [carbon monoxide] from burnt tires used as source of fire. He said old vehicle tires were cheaper and more available, but the smoke from the tires was lethal.

At the time, Bala did not know the magnitude of the danger in inhaling carbon monoxide until the State Health Ministry visited his spot and enlightened him and at the same time banned the use of tires for fire.

Today, Bala is the most popular individual in the business in the entire Kebbi metropolis, which means he earns a lot of money. He is personally capable of processing 40 cow heads a day. Bala is now the leader of Head Butchers in Kebbi with 30 young men working for him and all sharing in the profit. Each day, he makes as much as 30,000 - 40,000 naira and sometimes even more.

Because of his success, Bala was able to marry. He is married to three wives and has 11 children. Although he still lives in his parents' house, he has two pieces of land he purchased and intends to develop it in the future.

At one point in the past, Bala was invited by his brother to join his transportation business, and he handed him a key to a new truck. Bala did not object to the idea at first until his three wives met over it and advised Bala to return the keys. The family saw the transportation business as too risky considering the Nigerian roads and many accidents and incidents of robberies. Besides, how could he meet their needs when he is always on transit. These questions made him rethink, and finally returned the new truck and explained the reason to his brother, and the brother accepted his decision. He took back the keys without any sign of hurt feelings.

Stories of women in the market



Before the wedding: How friendship supports the business of two young female moringa leaf vendors.

Story protagonist: Habiba Abubakar (19) and Rukayya Abdullahi (20)
Gender: females
Tribe: Hausa
Type of food sold: boiled moringa leaves
Story Scout: Aisha Madina Maishanu

Women becoming the sole providers in their households is not a common thing in the northern part of Nigeria, where women's roles are often attached to household duties. However, Habiba Abubakar and Rukayya Abdullahi broke with social tradition and chose to fend for a better living by

becoming market traders.

These two young women, friends for years, have been selling moringa leaves in Kebbi's Central market since they were 13.

They have grown to become the main support to each other, and they have helped each other grow in the market. One trick they use to attract customers is applying heavy makeup. They noticed it attracts customers to them and enables them to make more money.

Occasionally, they step in for each other during market fights or if clients take their goods without payment, which happens from time to time as many of the men assume they are young and unwise.

Recently, they fought off two men after they tried to steal their moringa. "I removed my hijab approaching the fighting scene, as I heard Habiba shouting my name. We fought them and forced them to drop our goods and leave us alone," Rukayya said.

When Rukayya's father heard of the incident, she wasn't allowed to go to the market for weeks, as he already regarded trading in the market as a man's job, but when hunger got the best of her family, she got the approval to go out again.

Rukayya explained that she grew up in a household where she has always known her parents to be jobless. "Some days, we woke up without having food to eat." Motivated to help her parents and siblings get a better life, she went into selling moringa leaves.

Rukayya began selling moringa at age 13, with a start-up capital of only 20 naira. She explained how she struggled to get accepted in the market, because she was a young unmarried female and interested in business. "Our society looks down on women who are unmarried and want to get into business. This is one of the reasons why I struggled to get accepted in the market."

Although societal gender boundaries have eased up in the past few years, Rukayya still says she wouldn't have succeeded if she was not passionate about the business.

She says she enjoys making her family happy by giving them a better life, and it also makes her satisfied seeing the number of young girls that are also in the market today striving to succeed in their businesses.

Rukayya met Habiba when they were both 13 years old. "Due to our similar backgrounds, we had this instant click" said Habiba.

Habiba also sells boiled moringa leaves in the market. She faced the similar issues as Rukayya and also started working in the market to make ends meet for her family.

Habiba is passionate about attending school and succeeding in the market, and she enjoys her day to day interaction with people, but she says she knows her days are numbered: girls like her are supposed to get married at a certain age and stop whatever businesses they have started.

Asked if this worries her, she brushed it off, "I do not have a choice, this is the right thing to do. My family and the society expect me to get married and focus on my future husband and kids. I do not have a choice." Habiba said to me she would have loved to continue her business and also be able to attend school, but she knows her life is going to take her different directions.



The milk race: Fulani woman's faithful daily routine provides for family.

Story protagonist:	Tumba Mai Nono (40)
Gender:	female
Tribe:	Fulani
Type of food sold:	milk
Story Scout:	Abdullahi Ibrahim

Tumba is normally woken up by the cries of her cows every morning, especially by the calves suggesting that they are hungry, which also suggests it's time for Tumba's daily

morning exercise. Tumba must get up in good time otherwise the little calves will suck away the same milk she would want to collect to sell in the day's market.

Every morning is a competition between Tumba and the calves. As Tumba hurries to milk a cow, the calves feed on the rest. This competition between Tumba and the calves, otherwise the rightful owners of the milk, goes on for a couple of hours until Tumba fills her calabash, which normally hardly fills beyond seven liters, and which she keeps until 2pm when she would go to the market to sell.

Tumba does this every morning along with the household chores. It is the full responsibility of the Fulani woman to clean the house and sell milk every day. The husband makes sure there are enough of the cows, and he is also responsible for selling and replacing them when the need arises.

On a good day Tumba would make a profit of around 3000 naira. Tumba uses different sizes of cups to measure milk when selling it, the price of which is not final but subject to bargaining. At the end of every day, she uses the proceeds to purchase food stuff and other provisions for the family.

Although both Tumba and her husband are fed up with her milk trading, she cannot quit it so long as she is healthy, because, as she states, her husband has done his portion by providing cows, which serves as a source of steady income for the family, and because it is an age long

tradition—the pride of every Fulani woman, especially those in the rural areas or suburbs, to partake in the sale of milk in a calabash. And Tumba does not want to hurt that pride.

Every day Tumba would trek from “Tungar Na Samu”, a village among the suburbs of Birnin Kebbi, 1.5 miles from the highway. Sometimes she pays 100 naira for a commercial motorcycle [Okada] to take her to the highway and from there she goes to Yar Yara Market, and in three hours she is done with the sale.

Tumba is 40 years old and has four children. According to her, when she cannot get enough milk from her cows, she collects milk from neighbors who have excess. She always delights when the cows go “moo! moo!!” when they see her return home.



From milk to medical school: 15 year old wants to be a doctor to help local women.

Story protagonist: Rayyanatu Muhd Ahmed
Gender: female (15)
note: her mother consented to her interview
Tribe: Fulani
Type of food sold: cow milk
Story Scout: Aisha Madina Maishanu

For Rayyanatu, it never made sense to have so many male doctors in a state that is highly populated by women who are brought up in a manner that demands they be shy of men.

Rayyanatu’s intelligence was clear immediately upon meeting her for the first time. She is 15 years old, and like other Fulani, sells cow milk mocktails in the market, but in her case it’s to fund her education towards being one of the few female doctors in Kebbi state.

The mocktail is popularly known as Fura Da Nono, and it is made from blended grain that is molded into balls and then mixed up with thickened cow milk. These two products are put over ice and served.

Rayyanatu’s only goal in life has been becoming a medical doctor—a female doctor who would be like a warm blanket to other women in Kebbi. She spoke of her relatives and understood how

hard it is for women who were brought up to be shy, to then open up to male strangers. She said, “My cousin Halima almost lost her baby because her doctor was a man. She was not comfortable with him and was always avoiding going to the hospital while she was pregnant.”

Rayyanatu said to me that the hospital had only two female doctors, and one was on another shift while the other was on holiday. Her cousin deliberately skipped hospital checkups, because she was not comfortable with the male doctors. It was only until the baby started having complications and Halima lost consciousness that she was forced to go to the hospital.

The baby had been in the wrong position for weeks and Halima did not know, because she did not see the doctor. Rayyanatu said that experience was an eye opener for her, and that it increased her interest in becoming a doctor.

Every year hundreds of women in states with the same cultural upbringing as Kebbi state lose their babies due to lack of proper health care during pregnancy, a large part of this issue happens because the women are often not comfortable having male doctors assess them while they are pregnant so they choose to avoid going to the hospitals.

Rayyanatu comes from a poor home and her parents could not afford to enroll her in school, so she ventured into the milk business. Her father owns some cows, so she milks them and makes the mocktails from that milk.

When Rayyanatu was 11, she had earned enough money to pay for her school fee. But by that time, she was the oldest in her class and often even got mocked. “I was laughed at and teased because of my age, but I knew my aim and why I was in school, so I did not let any of that bother me,” said Rayyanatu.

Now she is almost done with her high school and has already started looking for scholarships to study medicine in the university.

Stories of service to others



Saved by kindness: Woman supported by Almajiri boys throughout her life.

Story protagonist:	Aisha Go Slow (65)
Gender:	female
Tribe:	Hausa
Type of food sold:	peanut dumplings
Story Scout:	Aisha Madina Maishanu

Ms. Aisha is 65 years old and a single mother and grandmother who lost her husband a few years ago to cancer. He left her without any money or a job to do.

When he died, she sought help from her family and his family, but they all turned their backs to her, simply because her husband had a huge passion for helping orphaned boys.

“They had always hated my husband for spending all his income on orphaned boys instead of giving it to them,” said Aisha.

When I asked her the reason her husband loved helping the orphaned boys, she narrated to me how her husband was out of town for business when they were younger, and she was pregnant. Her husband travelled a lot and hated how the orphaned boys would come begging for food early in the morning. He would send them away despite of how much Aisha tried to correct him.

One day, Aisha’s labor started, and her husband was still not back in town. She did not have any family close by or a phone to use, so she kept crying, because she thought she was going to die.

All of a sudden, the orphaned boys heard her cry and came to her rescue. “These boys carried me like a baby and walked me more than one kilometer to the hospital. I would have lost my baby if not for them.”

When he returned from his travels, her husband rushed to the hospital full of joy and happiness. When she told him how she was able to reach the hospital, he cried for almost a week, filled with regret about how he treated the Almajiri boys. Kebbi is one of the states with the highest number of kids that live on the streets popularly known as the “Almajiri”.

According to UNICEF, under the Almajiri system, parents send their children, mostly boys aged 4-12, to distant locations to acquire Qur’anic education. Many rural and poor families who can’t afford formal schooling have made this choice. While parents may believe they are fulfilling their obligation to provide a religious and moral education to their children and that the learning is provided free of charge, Almajiri children are often forced by their teachers (Mallams) to beg in the streets to fund their education.

Since that day, he vowed to always use the money he had to take care of them and give them all the help they needed to succeed in life.

After Aisha lost her husband, and she had no one to turn to, as all of her children were girls and had been married at a young age and did not work. In other words, they were unable to help her. So, she used her final savings to buy bean dumplings and start selling them at the market so she could continue catering for the needs of the orphaned boys just like her husband did.

To her surprise, the orphaned boys became her business partners and made the business much easier for her to handle. At some point, when the boys were on their feet, they stopped collecting her money and started giving back to her and taking care of her instead.

Aisha said she has learnt one vital lesson in life, “always be kind to people, because you do not know when you will need them.”



Food in a time of war: Soldier finds his calling in a market.

Story protagonist: Alhaji Muhd Sani Sharp Sharp (69)
Gender: male
Tribe: Hausa
Type of food sold: tomatoes
Story Scout: Aisha Madina Maishanu

Alhaji Muhd is a 69-year-old former soldier who fought protecting Nigeria during the Biafran War in the 1970’s, but

as he grew older, he chose to serve Nigeria and its citizens in a different way: selling tomatoes.

Alhaji Muhd says one can have the same intention in his heart and fulfill it by doing different things at different times.

He has fought many wars and has been on the battlefield since he was a young man. He said he appreciates his time fighting, but he had a good reason for leaving the battlefield.

“When I decided to leave the battlefield, a lot of people thought I was insane because fighting for Nigeria as a soldier was a very big deal back in the days, but I knew what I wanted,” said Alhaji Muhd.

During the war, he mentioned how much he and his colleagues starved on the battlefield while fighting, “We were underfed and malnourished. Everyone around us was fighting and no one had the role or time to focus on our feeding. That prompted me to leave the battlefield and take up that feeding role.” He started working in a market to serve his fellow colleagues and even the people in the local town.

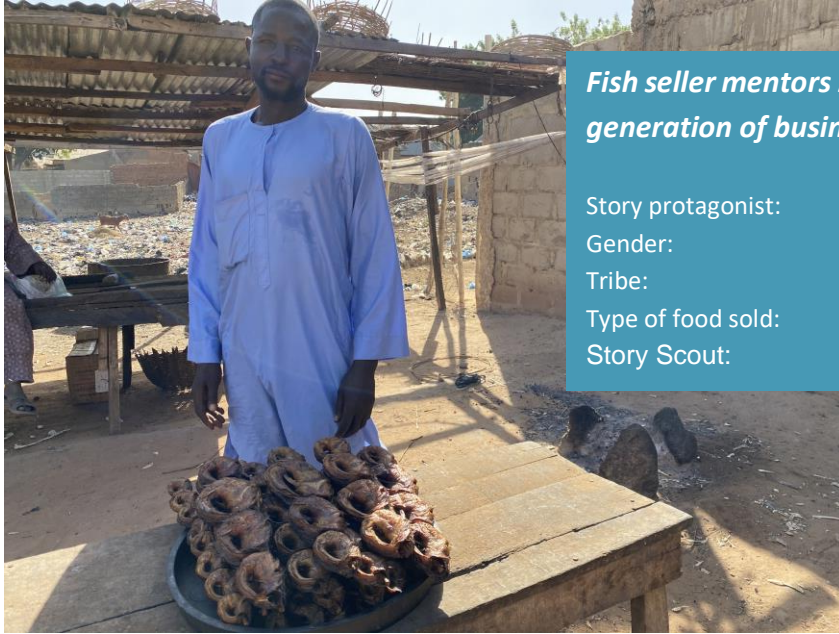
Alhaji Muhd would gather foodstuff and anything that could be eaten and take it to the soldiers on the battlefield so as to ensure they were all well fed. “I know what it is to fight on the battlefield on an empty stomach. I believe making sure they’re not hungry is another form of serving my country.”

Alhaji Muhd said that by doing what he did he felt a certain fulfillment and job satisfaction that he never had while fighting on the battlefield. He would take food to the soldiers and also sell it to the people in town. Since that time, Alhaji Muhd has been in the market.

“I love selling food stuff to people. I am now into tomatoes, because that is the most bought good after rice. I just want to make families happy and help them with a basic necessity that they will need in their lives,” he noted.

During the two and a half years of the Biafran war, between 500,000 and 2 million soldiers and Biafran civilians died of starvation. People lacked basic food stuff because of the closure of most shops and the disruptions from the war.

Even though Alhaji Muhd says he will forever be recognized and proud for his fighting during the war, he mentions that he is more proud of all the lives he saved by provision of food during the war through today.



Fish seller mentors Almajiri to become the next generation of businessmen.

Story protagonist:	Atiku Umar (29)
Gender:	male
Tribe:	Hausa
Type of food sold:	fish
Story Scout:	Aisha Madina Maishanu

Atiku Umar used to be an orphan living on the streets, and one man’s kind gesture towards him changed his life and left him wanting to do

the same for others.

Atiku who is 29 years old and sells fish in Yaryara market. He keeps a look out for young boys on the streets who seem to be like he used to be. Once under his tutelage, he guides and teaches them how to become proper businessmen. Atiku says his goal in life is to use his success to help others just like someone did for him.

“I slept on the streets and ate people’s leftovers when I was a child, but one kind man who is presently still in my life picked me up, cleaned me up, and taught me how to venture into selling fish. He changed my life forever.”

When Atiku was found by that man, he was about 10 years old and didn’t know much. The man was in the fish business, and he started by introducing Atiku to running errands for him, and then slowly he started teaching him how to catch fish and clean them.

Atiku was a fast learner as he quickly became his boss’ favorite boy because of how smart and inquisitive he was. At a young age, his boss sometimes left the whole store for Atiku to take care of on days that he wanted to rest.

Atiku was showered with love and kindness. He learned to stand on his feet and become his own man. He got a house, a car and could take a wife at 22 years old.

Fast forward to years later. Atiku now runs his own shop where he sells fish and also has young boys that he takes off the street to help them get a better life. Atiku mentioned how he does not want to have kids, because he knows there are a lot of kids on the streets like him who can easily be adopted.

“I now have about eight boys that are under me. I picked them up from the street and taught them how to become businessmen. The same love that I was showered with is what I try to give back to these boys. They need it” said Atiku.

Atiku’s biggest dream is to open up a business center that will focus on sheltering and educating street boys. He wants to have at least 500 boys under him in the next 3 to 4 years he says.

Atiku says he makes sure he has the parental consent of the kids who know their parents, before he takes them on as an apprentice. As for the ones who do not know their parents, he tries his best to make sure they enjoy the business and consent to working with him.

Kebbi is one of the states with the highest number of kids that live on the streets popularly known as the “Almajiri”.

Even though the Government claims that they are empowering the Almajiri kids and taking them off the streets, the increasing number of kids on the streets of Kebbi contradicts this statement.

Stories of resilience and motivation



Vendors risk the highways to drive in profit.

Story protagonists:	Hassan Umar (36) and Hauwau Abubakar (50)
Gender:	male / female
Tribe:	Hausa
Type of food sold:	grains such as rice, maize soya beans, beans etc. / gum Arabic
Story Scout:	Mustapha Muhammad

Despite the insecurity occasioned by the activities of bandits and kidnappers bedeviling Northwestern Nigeria, grains, rice and other food stuff sellers said their business is still doing well. Still, in some villages bordering Zamfara state, traders could not travel to buy food stuff for the fear of bandits and kidnappers who have been disturbing the region for some time now.

Hassan Umar, 36, is in the business of buying and selling rice, grains, soya beans, and other food stuff in Birnin Kebbi. He said some time ago gunmen attacked a market while they were transacting their business in the market. “They came on motorbike, shot a policeman dead in our presence in the market and ran away before the military came.”

He continued, “Our business ... is seasonal. There is a peak period of high demand, most especially during the dry season, and low demand during the harvest period. These are the two main seasons we have in this business. I buy and sell. I also go to other village markets to buy and bring it here to Birnin Kebbi. But because of the problem of insecurity occasioned by the activities of bandits and kidnappers, we do not go to some places now.”

He said he had been in this business for over 25 years buying and selling food stuff, and he has travelled to all the nooks and crannies of Kebbi, Zamfara, Sokoto, and Katsina states in search of rice, beans, grains, soya beans, and other food stuff to buy and sell.

“I grew up in this business, and with this business I have achieved a lot; I married and have three kids from the marriage. All my children are in private schools with the money accrued from this business.”

Umar also relies much on his religion. “The solution to the problem of insecurity is to repent and turn to Allah. We might have offended Allah, and He decided to punish us in this way, but the best solution is to supplicate and ask God for forgiveness of our sins.”

Meanwhile, Hauwau Abubakar, 50, a gum arabic seller, who displayed her wares on a tray at a market in Birnin Kebbi, has a different take on the security situation. It hasn't stopped her at all. For her, the business of gum arabic is thriving, and it is worth doing business despite the challenges of insecurity on the roads in the region.

“I started this business of gum arabic buying and selling since when I was a young girl, and Glory be to Allah, I have achieved a lot with this business; I built a house, married my daughter and travelled to Saudi Arabia for pilgrimage. We don't have much of a problem on the road. The road is a bit safe and motorable.”

She appealed to the government to assist them with soft loans in order to boost their business. “I would appreciate it if the government could assist us with capital to boost our business. Apart from this business of gum arabic, I also buy and sell grasshoppers and several other things.”

For Hassan Umar, he has a capital to run his business, but he only worries about the insecurity in some villages he buys foodstuff.

“I have been to several villages in search of food stuff to buy, places like: Dan dume, Mangi, Salga, Yawuri, Dadin kowa up to villages in Zamfara,” Umar has said. “But I have stopped going to Bena, due to fear of kidnapping.”



Going low: Elderly vendor captures locust bean market by cutting prices...in half.

Story protagonist:	Yake Bagudu (70)
Gender:	female
Tribe:	Hausa
Type of food sold:	locust beans
Story Scout:	Aisha Madina Maishanu

70-year-old locust beans seller Yake Bagudu is the most popular locust beans seller in Yaryara market.

For years after losing her husband, she had struggled to keep up in the industry, because of her old age and all the young kids coming up with new tactics to keep their customer base growing.

“I became frustrated because I have always wanted to succeed in business, and at the time that I needed the money I was not succeeding,” said Yake.

Yake was in business when she was a young girl, but like almost every young girl in northern Nigeria, social norms and tradition told her that marriage was the only thing she could aspire to achieve. So, she did as she was told.

Years down the line after her husband died, even though she was not young anymore she still tried to make it back into the business world by selling locust beans. Unfortunately, things didn't go too well for Yake.

“All the younger locust bean sellers that were vibrant and smart were taking away all the customers. No one was buying from me, so I had to think of something to make them turn my way.”

That is when Yake tried a simple but rewarding trick. She slashed her prices in half, and the customers came in running from every direction. She said she was able to do that, because she was the only person running her business. She grew the beans in her farm, and she didn't have any workers to pay.

Other sellers had staff to pay, but Yake was a one-woman operation. After slashing her prices, customers could not stop coming to her. Soon she was dominating the locust beans trade in Yaryara market.

“I was so proud of myself. I knew I was smart when I was younger, so I tried to find that side of me once again.”

All the other locust beans sellers have moved to different locations, as business was not going well for them due to Yake’s loyal customer base.

Yake never thought her customer base would be this large. Now, as the years go by and as she gets older, she gets help from some of her daughters and nieces so as to keep things moving and also teach them the business for their own good.

“Sometimes a simple tactic can make you succeed. Not everything has to be complicated. When you calm your mind down, great ideas will start flowing,” said Yake.



Teenage “Iron Lady” dreams to grow business with new rice mill.

Story protagonist:	Maryam Mohammed (17)
note:	her mother consented to the interview
Gender:	female
Tribe:	Hausa
Type of food sold:	rice
Story Scout:	Mustapha Muhammad

Maryam Mohammed helps her mother process rice paddy and supply it to Birnin Kebbi’s Central Market. She dreams to own a local rice milling machine to boost production and earn more money.

Today, she purchases the paddy from the Ambursa market, takes it back home, boils, and dries it, and takes it to a local milling company. After milling, they sell it to retailers in the markets.

Her mother, who occupies a major role in the trade, asked Maryam to go to the market and sell the rice after being processed. From that point on, she is in control of the profit. She notes that they produce and sell no less than 5 sacks and maximum of 7 every week.

She is like an iron lady who goes to the village markets and buys the paddy for the family to survive. Her father is poor and cannot afford to take care of them, so they had to find a means of livelihood.

She said the rice business is very lucrative and they use the money to feed themselves and other domestic expenses. Many traders have gone into rice production since Nigeria's ban on rice importation and rice milling companies are increasingly springing up across the country.

"My mother buys clothes for me and my siblings. Everything we need in life we get it from the money we earn."

Maryam said her father is alive, and in support of what they do. He even helps to let them know if a paddy is being sold somewhere nearby so they can get the raw material for the production.

"Our father encourages us, and he is in full support of the business. He searches for the paddy and lets us go purchase it."

Maryam says she is happy with the business, although she is not at school, as school is happening when she is busy with rice production and sale.

She narrated the activities they do for the rice to be ready for the Central Market.

"On every Sunday we go to Ambursa market (the market day), and we buy paddy. We come back home late in the evening. On Monday, we boil the paddy and soak it in water till the next day. On Tuesday we boil it again and remove it from the water then place it under the sun to dry. On Wednesday we take it to the local milling machine; after that we take it home to sort it and remove the unwanted shell. Then, we go to the market and sell."

Maryam is enthusiastic about getting a local milling machine of their own, which, according to her, would help and boost their business.

"We want help to acquire a local milling machine, and we pray that this dream becomes a reality; we want to own it."

Maryam Mohammed is among the thousands of girls who are not in school just to make both ends meet in Birnin Kebbi. Some hawk on the streets to earn a living, but Maryam has a business with a vision to expand it; she is praying to own a local milling machine to get more money and speed up the rice production.

Sometimes they may have to wait in a queue at the rice mill before they get their own rice done, but should they have their own local milling machine that would help them process the rice quicker and more reliably without ever having to wait.

Although Nigeria is a signatory to the Child Rights Act, the law is rarely enforced, and Maryam's family feels it is a blessing that their daughter can earn money and help their family.

Some children, like Maryam Mohammed, get backing from their own parents to do the work even though they are not yet 18 years old.



Rice trader looks back on what made him successful: mother's trust, experience, and buying a donkey at 10 years old.

Story protagonist:	Mustapha Muhammad (35)
Gender:	male
Tribe:	Hausa
Type of food sold:	rice
Story Scout:	Abdullahi Ibrahim

In the Tsohon Kasuwa market, Mustapha is second to none amongst his age mates who are into rice trading. Mustapha came into the world without a father to raise him, the youngest, and the only male child in the family. Mustapha had an idea about his father. He was told that his father was a fish vendor, but Mustapha had nobody to teach him fish trading.

Mustapha's mother, Hajiya Hauwa, was into rice trading right from when he can remember. She used her house as a local rice mill and engaged her three daughters to take the rice from Gwangwaji, a suburb some few miles away from Birnin Kebbi metropolis, to sell at the Old Market.

While Mustapha was growing up, his mother instructed his sisters to always carry Mustapha along when they went house to house selling rice, so that he could learn the trade. Eventually the three sisters were given away to marriage, leaving Mustapha alone.

At 10-year-old, Mustapha's mother decided to let Mustapha work independently; she gave him a soft loan to start his own rice trading. With this loan, Mustapha bought a donkey and assumed his own rice trading, only this time with a difference. Instead of carrying rice in a basin on his head, he carried it in sacks to the market on a Donkey.

Mustapha started his business with three 100kg bags, each costing 5000 naira at the time. He rode his Donkey to the Old Market to sell. This was not an easy period for Mustapha as he did not have any customers to buy from him. Things got worse, and Mustapha went bankrupt. He abandoned the rice business and left Nigeria for Niger Republic.

While in Niger, Mustapha became a commercial motorcycle rider [Okada] with the aim of saving enough to go back to his rice business. He lived in Niger doing the Okada business for two years. Within the two years, Mustapha raised the equivalent of 200,000 naira. With this amount in his possession, Mustapha came back to Nigeria and resumed his rice business in the Kebbi Old Market.

Having gone through thick and thin, in time Mustapha began to master the trade. He now has many customers, and he is capable of selling up to thirty 100kg bags every week. According to Mustapha he makes a profit of between 20,000 and 30,000 naira daily, and he was doing fine until just recently, due to the pandemic and current global situation.

Times are now hard according to Mustapha; the little profit he makes is what he uses to support his family and his aged mother. To complement his rice trading Mustapha also farms during the rainy season. Besides his mother who still helps him from time to time, he also receives support from the big rice traders who assist him with bags of rice to sell and pay back in due course. This has helped him grow his business.

Mustapha has attributed the success he has had in the business to his determination and honesty. Mustapha is now married with two wives and six children, and they all go to school for both Islamic and western education. According to him, the children deserve the right to go into any business of their choice so long as it is legitimate.

When contacted, Mustapha's mother, a soft spoken and shy old woman, expressed gratitude to God for giving her Mustapha, her only male child. She blessed Mustapha for providing her with all her needs.



A fisherman's life: travel, trading, and sleeping with an alligator.

Story protagonist: Usman Mai Kifi (65)
Gender: male
Tribe: Hausa
Type of food sold: fish
Story Scout: Abdullahi Ibrahim

He started his fish business in his mid-thirties, and he is now 30 years in the fish business. For many years, he both caught fish and sold them. According to Usman there is more gain for a fish vendor who catches and sells at the same time than a mere vendor who only buys from fishermen.

Usman is a master of every aspect of fishing. He also produces fishing gear, such as nets and hooks. For years, Usman enjoyed multiple benefits from his talents; selling fish gears to his fisherman colleagues and fish to other vendors.

Before his retirement from active fishing, Usman built two houses, one in Argungu, his hometown, 50km away from Birnin Kebbi, and one in Takalau where he stays with his family.

Usman was a big-time fisherman and travelled to many places far and wide for fishing. He spent many years in Niger state neighboring Kebbi State, moving from one fishing village to another in search of more fish. He has been in Zamare, Bukadu, Agwara villages even as far as Benue state, a riverside area almost 700 miles from Kebbi. Wherever he learnt there was plenty of fish, he would go there.

He travelled to the Chad Republic, to the riverside villages between Nigeria and Chad. Chad is known for its availability of good fish. According to Usman, he had made much profit dealing in fish: he made good money and good friends in the business.

Today, age is no longer on his side, so finally he made up his mind and returned home to his family. He returned home and combined farming with fish selling.

During his years traveling around and fishing, Usman said he escaped death twice by the whiskers; once, he spent the night in a River face to face with a Hippopotamus, and he wrestled a crocodile and escaped with a few cuts.

I asked Usman his most recent sad experiences in the business and he said “*Ya faru jiya jiya*” meaning “*it happened and just yesterday*”. According to Usman he has a perpetual worry. Any day he fails to sell his catch before Sunset is a bad day because it has to be sold at a giveaway. Just yesterday he sold his fish worth 6,000 naira at the rate of 3,500.

Usman is married to one wife and with four children. In his farm, he produces tomatoes which he sells to the vendors and some his wife sells at home. Two of his children, 17 and 15 years old, have also followed the ‘footsteps’ of their father, and they catch Fish too. To him there is no business as fish business and “only death can do them apart,” he said.

I asked Usman whether hygiene is considered important seeing that the spot where the fish is processed is next to a garbage area, and he said their Fish is always covered, and most of the trash is just plastic bags. Generally, hygiene is not given much consideration. The greatest ecological problem in the area is plastic. Everything bought is served in plastic bags and this is causing a serious problem in the community and the farmlands as it is not biodegradable. The plastics are everywhere including in the drainages.



Oil and beans: Vendors fund education and call for better facilities to navigate price fluctuations.

Story protagonists:	Mansur Aliyu (26) and Abubakar Saliyu (35)
Gender:	males
Tribe:	Hausa
Type of food sold:	palm oil and groundnut oil / soya beans, beans
Story Scout:	Mustapha Muhammad

Mansur Aliyu, a groundnut and palm oil seller at Yar

Yara market in Birnin Kebbi, is a 200-level student of the Federal University Birnin Kebbi, and said he is determined to acquire a university degree in order to add value to his business of selling palm and groundnut oil. It is difficult though, the 26-year-old Aliyu, who is studying statistics, said the major challenge they are facing now is the hike in prices of the commodity.

He said two months ago 25 liters of palm oil was sold at 14,000 naira, but now the same quantity of palm oil is sold at the cost of 20,000 naira which forced some of his customers to resort to only buying a half or quarter bottle.

He said a customer who in the past used to buy 4 liters now has to resort to buying only a one-liter bottle or even half a bottle. The hike in price of the commodity, which is attributed to the harsh economic condition in the country, has brought untold hardship on the people.

“Our main problem is the daily increase in the prices of the commodity...Once the price comes down, there will be high demand and once there is high demand there will be more turnover and sales. The other challenge we are facing is capital. Most of us are living from hand to mouth and the little capital that we are managing from our business is not much. [Still,] we thank God for this trade; it is from here that we feed ourselves. We use the earnings for school as well. I bought a motorbike and go to school if there is a lecture and come back to the market if there is none.”

His elder brother was a pioneer for the palm oil and groundnut oil business before he left for government work after he graduated from the university. Aliyu said, “My brother that introduced me into this business has achieved a lot; he has built his house, married a wife and sponsored himself to University with this business. What I always remember that makes me happy is that my brother and I have gained so much from this small shop—trading palm oil and groundnut oil, making life better for both of us.”

Another trader, Abubakar Salihu, at Tsohuwar Kasuwa Market sells soya beans, beans, grains, and groceries, said the business is booming and thriving on a daily basis.

Like Mansur Aliyu, Abubakar Salihu also used what he earned from the business to pay for school. He said that with this business he has achieved a lot: “With this business, I have bought a house, married a wife with whom we have four children, and three of them are schooling. I have my National Certificate in Education (NCE) and hope to further my education.”

In the past, he noted, they have suffered much in preserving beans where they resort to using chemicals to preserve. But those methods have disappeared with the arrival of companies that have safer methods of preservation by producing woven sacks.

“We thank God for this business. Before now, our method of storage was the use of chemicals, but now, there is woven sack that is being produced by some companies for the preservation of beans. You can keep it for a long time without it spoiling. Once in the sack the beans can stay for up to 2 years.”



“Home is home”: Clothing vendor makes the best of his tomato business through relationships with customers.

Story protagonist:	Muhammad Sani “Sharp-Sharp”
Gender:	male
Tribe:	Hausa
Age:	65
Type of food sold:	tomatoes and other vegetables
Story Scout:	Abdullahi Ibrahim

Muhammad Sani is 65 years old and has been trading tomatoes and vegetables for over twenty-five years. Initially he traded provisions and clothing material some of which he procured through a loan, but which he has since repaid. This work initially took him to Kaduna state where he

ran a makeshift shop selling children’s clothes and general underwear.

Muhammad returned briefly to Kebbi and got married, and then took his wife back to Kaduna and continued his clothing trading. This went for several years until one day he thought of trying Kano, because, according to him, Kano was more of a commercial center than Kaduna.

He left for Kano, leaving his wife and children in Kaduna, because his children were in school there. During that period, he shuttled from Kano to Kaduna periodically to see them.

While still in Kano, Muhammad took another wife, someone close by to comfort him. With the second wife around, Muhammad continued his business. News of the sudden death of Muhammad’s first wife in Kaduna shook and dislodged him. After grieving for some time Muhammad was left with no option but to relocate back to Kaduna.

He returned to his former base and together with his younger wife tried to pick up from where he left. According to Muhammad, restarting his business back in Kaduna was not easy. Some of his business associates and familiar faces had relocated to unknown destinations.

So many changes had affected his business. More shops and shopping malls were now running; there was much more competition; and people's purchasing power was lower due to inflation. All of these negatively impacted his business, and moreover he was unable to secure short term loan from his business associates as they too were affected by the same phenomena.

Eventually he went bankrupt. He wandered around trying to get back on his feet, but he felt it was all in vain. Of course, he still had family demands, and so Muhammad decided to return to Kebbi, his hometown. Home is home he said.

When he returned to Kebbi, he began to brainstorm on what to do next. He thought of trading in spices and flavors, seeing that it is one of the common businesses in his area. After a few trials he dropped it, because there was not much profit. He then tried the vegetable business, because according to him though perishable, vegetables were cheap, and through this, he thought he could support his family again.

His first sad experience as a vegetable trader was from buyers; buyers have their existing customers in the Yar Yara Market and as a result did not patronize him much. Many times, Muhammad would go home with most of the vegetable unsold and before the next day some of it would go bad.

This went on for some time, but he was never discouraged, and eventually it began to work.

Two reasons Muhammad attributed to his success in business are his friendliness and sense of humor and his nickname "Sharp-Sharp," as he is fondly called by his customers, especially children who mostly are the ones sent to buy things from him. He got this nickname from his customers back in Kaduna. Muhammad's shop used to be bustling with customers and Muhammad would say to the customer next in line "what do you want, say it sharp-sharp, other customers are waiting."

Although he is comfortable in vegetable trading, according to Muhammad he is still eyeing his former business of trading in clothes. His dream is to hit a million naira, and with that he will dump tomato trading and go back to his former business of trading in clothing material, because it was what he knew how to do best.

I asked Muhammad of his success story, and he said he is married with three wives and has 25 children, some of them in the government employment and some married with children. These and his two houses in Birnin Kebbi he counts as success. He said that if all goes well, he may go after the fourth wife. I asked him whether at 65 he still feels like taking a new wife...he looked at me and laughed.



Relentless: Rice trader never stops, even when things look hopeless.

Story protagonist:	Bala Yarawal (40)
Gender:	male
Tribe:	Hausa
Type of food sold:	rice
Story Scout:	Abdullahi Ibrahim

It was morning, and Bala woke up as usual, sat down alone in his room preoccupied with the thoughts of his situation. Bala was one of the young men in “Tungan

Dan Nupe” a village about 30 miles from Birnin Kebbi, who was jobless and had no capital, nowhere to begin. Bala’s situation got him so worried he stood up and just decided to go to the market, not to buy or sell anything, but just go to the market; perhaps he could get some manual job, by which he would find some food to eat.

Bala roamed the village market for quite some days in vain. One morning, as Bala was lying down in his room, he had a brainwave and thought he could approach the paddy rice vendors, the ones that he often enjoys jokes with. Perhaps if he offers to help them sell their rice, they may agree to give him part of the profit.

Bala gave it a shot. He went to the market and made an attempt. Luckily for Bala, a rice vendor accepted Bala’s proposition and enrolled him as a helper. The arrangement between Bala and his new master was satisfactory. Bala began with four sacks of 100kg rice. This he took to the Old Market in Birnin Kebbi, sold it off, returned the money, and was paid 800 naira.

Determined to be his own boss, Bala worked doggedly and saved part of his daily pay. He intended to start his own business. Day in and day out, Bala added numbers of rice sacks from four up to 17 to be sold at the Old Market in Birnin Kebbi. Bala had no problem selling all the

sacks once in the Market, because rice vendors generally have no problem selling as rice is the common food in Kebbi.

Today, Bala is independent, but it is still difficult. He was able to start his own business from his savings. Things had been working well for Bala, but now the global economic situation has changed and this has affected his customers' purchasing power, which is now much weaker than before.

To augment the rice market sales, Bala decided to visit the farm for dry season rice cultivation. He puts in the capital from his rice business into the farm and according to Bala he did have a good harvest. Most often he would harvest about 40 sacks of 100kg rice. Some of it he takes home for the family, and the rest he takes to the market.

He does not stop there. Bala also collects wood fire for sale, because he does not want to spend a day without earning money. Bala is married with a wife and eight children. His ambition is to make enough money to build an additional house, buy a bike, and to get married again.



Bulldozed to success: Vendor's business prospers after being destroyed.

Story protagonist:	Malam Isa Zaki (53)
Gender:	male
Tribe:	Hausa
Type of food sold:	vegetables
Story Scout:	Abdullahi Ibrahim

Isa showed up at his business premises one morning and saw a bulldozer at the site clearing anything by the roadside. The government was going to expand the road network around the area and Isa's place was by the shoulder of the road, just before the entrance to the Yar Yara market.

Isa did not even have a makeshift kiosk at the site as all items he sold were displayed on the ground, so did not feel as if he had lost money. But this was where he had to be located, and this was where his customer base knew to find him.

Isa was into the sales of polythene bags, paraffin and wood for fire, and normally when he closed, he packed everything and left.

After the bulldozers showed up, the only space available for Isa was to go a little further into the market and that was not a good place for the sale of his type of commodity. Though there was a space for the paraffin and the polythene bags, there was no space for the wood for fire, which was the fastest moving item among the items he sold.

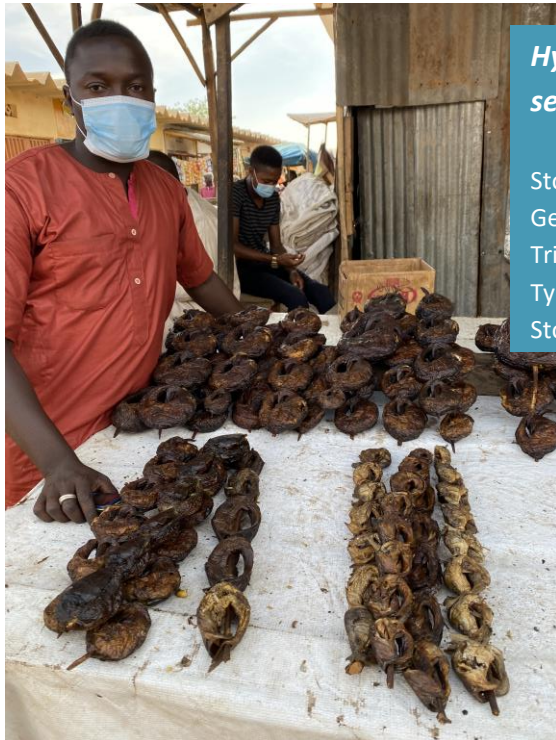
As an internally displaced person, Isa saw his business existence under a serious threat. The survival of his family became a problem, and after a while Isa considered quitting the sales of wood fire, because it required more space. He then thought of adding vegetables instead, as they were cheap to procure, and so didn't require a lot of capital. That was how Isa became a vegetable trader.

The beginning was tough for his vegetable sales, as he recorded little or no patronage at all, and much of the vegetables went to waste. To make the business possible, Isa shifted the sales of wood fire and some of the vegetables to his wife to sell to the people back at home in his area [Tudun Wada]. This has helped Isa and his family. He has an understanding wife who gave him every support, and because of that he had no psychological stress.

When he began the vegetable trading, he would buy a huge bundle of spinach at 2000 naira and many times return home with the whole lot unsold. This was how Isa had been managing his business. Eventually Isa was able to construct a shop in the market premises where he now keeps his items under lock and key and is able to store unused items until later days.

Isa's business is now prospering, and he is living fine. The Yar Yara market community loves and respects Isa for his simplicity and honesty. They chose him to be the Chairman of the traders, a position he still holds.

Stories of occupational hazards



Hypnotized: Neighbor's jealousy derails fish seller's business.

Story protagonist:	Rufai Adamu (34)
Gender:	male
Tribe:	Hausa
Type of food sold:	fish
Story Scout:	Aisha Madina Maishanu

When I used to hear stories of jealous coworkers hypnotizing or incapacitating their colleagues, I found them strange and hard to believe. Then, in the Kebbi Central Market, I met a vendor named Rufai.

He is a 34-year-old fish seller who has been in business for 13 years after inheriting it from his

father who inherited it from his father.

In northern Nigeria, old culture often supersedes more modern beliefs, and locals will often trust herbal medicines given by native doctors more than they would trust any medicine prescribed by a medical doctor or a religious cleric.

People sometimes meet traditional and spiritual doctors who claim a way to work with dark magic. They pay these spiritual doctors to help them hurt or heal people. Some of these spiritual doctors communicate with Jinns who are like spirits, and they execute their wishes for them. These doctors will give them poison or anything that if touched or used by the target would cause harm to them.

Years ago, Rufai was one of the most popular fish sellers and made thousands of naira per day. He was happy with his job and interacted well with all his colleagues—until the unfortunate day he became sick out of the blue.

As a sharp and adept young trader, he did not have many issues with selling his items day to day and his budget calculations. Then, all of a sudden, he kept giving his customers the wrong prices and miscalculating his prices. This resulted in the loss of thousands of naira.

In Rufai's words, he thought he was going to die, as that was one of the scariest times in his life. He started seeing psychiatrists and doctors because of his declining mental and physical health.

Rufai noted, "I was frustrated because every doctor I met would tell me my results show that I was clinically well, and they do not know how to help me."

In time it got so bad that Rufai had to sell his shop and everything he owned in the market to fund his family's day to day life. He grew bedridden and could do nothing.

Then one day, Rufai's old time friend Muhammad visited him, and he scolded Rufai for not trying any traditional and cultural herbalist for a proper diagnosis. Muhammad said, "these medical doctors do not know what they are doing. Let me take you to my herbalist."

The herbalist gave Rufai herbal drugs which made him stronger. He kept getting better by the day and even went to visit his colleagues at the market whenever he went out for his daily walks.

As he continued to get better, he was surprised when one of his colleagues came to his house begging him for forgiveness.

"I saw how well you were doing by selling fish, and I believed you were a threat to my business, that is my reason for meeting the herbalist and causing you harm," said Rufai's colleague.

Rufai's colleague mentioned that he got a powder from the herbalist, and he was asked to place it wherever Rufai would step—this is how he got his target. After this substance had touched Rufai, the spiritual curse started working.

Rufai forgave him after a few weeks, and even went back to the market. When his other colleagues asked why he came back despite everything, he said to them "going through that situation only made me stronger and gave me the courage to strive to succeed more and more in this market."

Rufai said he had to borrow money from some of his colleagues to start his business all over again since he lost most of what he had.

Stories like Rufai are quite common in northern Nigeria. People still meet herbalists and traditional native doctors for cases like this.

These native doctors claim to have ways to hypnotize people via using spiritual beings who just need contact with the targets. That is where herbal drugs come in. If the person is given a drink, or a certain powder that needs to touch them, then the spiritual beings have their access to either heal or harm.

Rufai is presently doing very well in the market as one of the most tactical young vendors in the Central Market of Kebbi.



Blessing or a curse? Fish vendor's health impacted by fire...and wife's wishes.

Story protagonist:	Dalhatu Mai Kifi (40)
Gender:	male
Tribe:	Hausa
Type of food sold:	fish
Story Scout:	Abdullahi Ibrahim

Dalhatu picked his shovel early in the morning and headed out to the construction site.

Dalhatu was a blue-collar worker who was paid daily and whenever there was no construction job for that day survival became a serious problem. His daily rate was 500 naira, and with this he could not take

care of his needs beyond a couple of days.

When Dalhatu was done with work at the construction site, he joined his friend [Abu Dan Mama] in a nearby shade. The friend was a fish vendor and Dalhatu assisted him in removing the fish scales. This Dalhatu did every day, and the friend allowed Dalhatu to enjoy some of the fish.

Dalhatu was never happy with his blue-collar work, but he kept that to himself.

One fateful day Dalhatu's friend [Abu Dan Mama] suggested that Dalhatu try the fish business as he may like it more than the laborer work. Dalhatu went home thinking about the idea.

"I had no capital to start the business, so one day when we closed work at the construction site some planks were left over, and I thought of asking the contractor [Alhaji Yero] if I could use them.

When I secured the planks, I begged my neighbor, a carpenter, to help me construct a bench and a table with a pledge to pay him back later on, which I did. People wondered what I was going to do with the table. I approached Usman Mai Kifi and explained my situation to him and begged him to come to my aid. Usman agreed to loan me some fish to begin with. Usman is a nice person, so he gave me fish worth 3,000 naira. With that, I launched my first fish business at the Yar Yara market, and steadily I gained ground in the fish business. I have been into the fish business now for 15 years, and with it I married my wife and bought a house.”

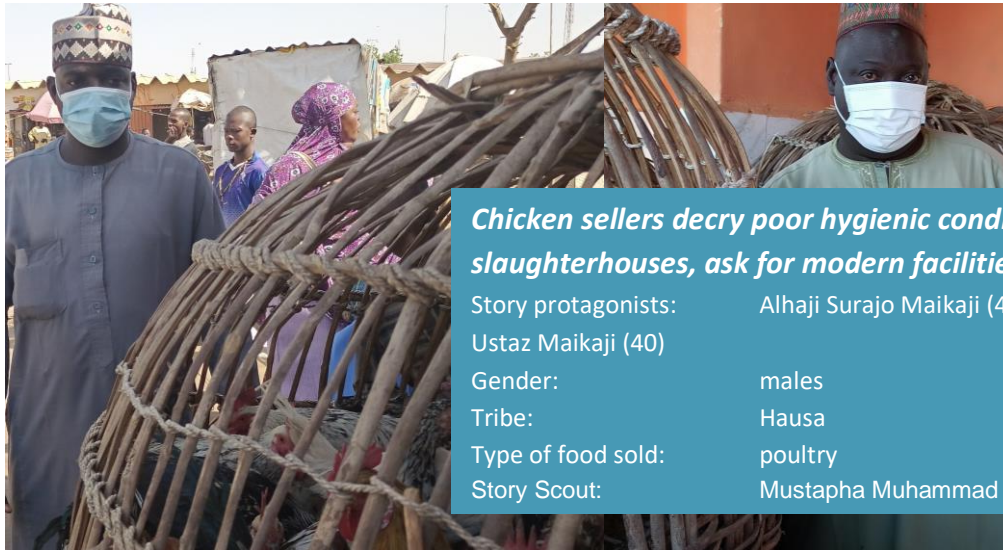
Although Dalhatu is doing well as a fish vendor, with time he began to notice heat rashes all over his body. On inquiry, he was told that it was the heat from the fire he exposes himself to anytime he fries fish, which is something he does every day. Sometimes his body swells up, and it was a condition other fish sellers and cow head processors experienced as well. He was diagnosed twice by a medical practitioner and was given drugs.

He went home the first time he felt sick and told his wife of his intention to quit the fish business, because of the heat rashes. *“And do what?”* The wife demanded. *“And find something else to do. Look at my body swelling, look at the rashes.”* According to Dalhatu the wife argued, *“Then where else would you make as much money? Do go to the Doctor to prescribe more drugs for you, it will heal.”*

When she said that to Dalhatu he felt bad because it appeared to him his wife does not care about him as much as she cares about the money he makes in the business. As he was not in the mood to argue, he took it with a pinch of salt and let it go. He now takes medication to help with the rashes.

Dalhatu has two young children and has already introduced them to fish business, with the hope that one day they will come to his aid. In the meantime, Dalhatu is still hanging on to his business, as his wife suggested.

Stories of reliance on the government for business help



Chicken sellers decry poor hygienic conditions of slaughterhouses, ask for modern facilities.

Story protagonists:	Alhaji Surajo Maikaji (45) and Usman Ustaz Maikaji (40)
Gender:	males
Tribe:	Hausa
Type of food sold:	poultry
Story Scout:	Mustapha Muhammad

Alhaji Surajo, 45 years old, is the chairman of the chicken sellers' association in Kebbi State. He has spent over 30 years in the business of chicken meat processing and selling, and he inherited his business from his father. He said there is a need to have a modern poultry slaughterhouse to stay safe, hygienic, and healthy.

"We need a very hygienic chicken slaughterhouse in such a way that the water system will wash away all the blood stains in the place," Surajo said in an interview in the Central market Birnin Kebbi.

"The government has promised to construct a borehole for us here to help us with steady water supply and wash the dirt and blood around the place from when we cut the chicken into pieces; but it's yet to happen. We are calling for the government to fulfil its promise, as it will go a long way in making the chicken safer to eat."

Surajo shared his pride in what he had achieved: "I have achieved a lot in this business, because with this business I have built a house, sponsored my father, mother and myself to Saudi Arabia for pilgrimage, and I have my eldest son in his final year diploma program."

He appealed to the government to come in to modernize the place where they prepare the meat to make it more conducive for them to run their business by providing a modern cage and water.

Many of the small traders here wait for government assistance. They will not personally invest to improve their business, and as a result, customers have no other options.

Another poultry trader, Alhaji Usman Ustazu Mai Kaji made an appeal to the authorities to modernize the system of poultry trade in Birnin Kebbi market. “We are appealing to the government to help us modernize the place where we do our business. I grew up seeing my father in this business of chicken meat selling. He died, and I have taken over the business. I have continued to take care of the family my father left behind, they are about 15, including my children all under my care. I have been sponsoring them for school. Some have finished university and others are at secondary and primary level.”

For both Alhaji Surajo Mai Kaji and Alhaji Usman Maikaji inherited the poultry business from their parents and called for the authorities to modernize the system and give some loans to the traders.



Export potential: Fish sellers project gains in fish sector if government ramps up storage facilities.

Story protagonists:	Umar Bakatara (60) and Yau Abubakar Bugga (40)
Gender:	males
Tribe:	Hausa
Type of food sold:	fish
Story Scout:	Mustapha Muhammad

Fish sellers in the northwestern state of Kebbi, one of Nigeria’s leading states in fish production, are upset over the lack of cooling systems that could allow them to store the fish and prevent them from going bad. Lack of these cooling systems diminish their hopes to go into export.

Umaru Bakatara Goron Daji, 60, the Chairman of the fish sellers association in Kebbi State, noted that it is a well-known fact that Kebbi state is the epicenter of fish. It would be good to have a cooling system and encourage the fish sellers to go into export by supporting them with significant capital.

He said they have enough fishponds that could produce millions of fish that could be exported outside the country and thereby generate revenue for them and the government.

“The state government has constructed the building for the refrigeration here. You can see it, but it is empty and has no cooling system in it. If the authorities could provide the cooling system inside the building, I believe it would help us a lot to reduce the losses.” Bakatara said.

“Before I ventured into selling fish, I was a fisherman. Both the sellers and the fishermen are financially incapacitated as a result of economic meltdown that affected almost all the sectors of the economy. We have enough fishponds, but we do not have enough money to venture into the business of fish farming in large quantities.”

According to him they have a plan to smoke the fish and prepare it for export, but because they do not have enough capital to cover the large-scale machinery required to dry large amounts of fish, the plan remains an unrealized dream.

“We even have a plan of smoking the fish for export, but there is no capital to do that. You cannot venture into such business without enough capital because it is a capital-intensive business. We are appealing to the government to consider our plights and come in,” he said.

“Under the auspice of our union, we have converged on Abuja for a meeting more than 30 times, but the government has not come to our aid. We have fulfilled all the requirements for a loan, but up till this moment I am talking to you, the government is yet to answer our call for a loan to boost our market and business of fish selling.”

Bakatara said Covid-19 has worsened the situation and has crippled them and brought about a very harsh economic condition, stressing that before the advent of the coronavirus, you cannot count the numbers of truckloads of fish that came to this market on daily basis from the other parts of the state.

“Before now, if you came to this market, you would see everywhere stock piled fish; but now you can see for yourself how the market is. Before now, one person could buy and stock fish of over

2 million naira but not now. If government can help us with loan to boost our business, this business will employ our teeming youths who are roaming the street.”

Ya’u Abubakar Bogga is another fish seller in Kebbi state. He said he has been in the business of fish selling for over 25 years, and he started with nothing.

“I have been in this business for over 25 years now; I started with small capital buying the fish from the fishermen on the banks of the river. Then I started frying the fish to sell later on...Now, I engage in both dry and fresh fish sales. In Kebbi our main occupation is farming and fishing but recently, activities of government officials are threatening the growth of the business. Some government officials who are appointed by the government to monitor and regulate fishing in the river are being selective, allowing some and denying other fishermen the privilege to fish,” he said.

He added that, “My advice to the government is to treat all fishermen equally and secondly is for the government to intervene by giving us soft loans to boost our business. We have never benefited from federal government loans, but the economic situation in the country warrants this call. We are appealing to the government to see to this and give us a soft loan.”



Covid-19 lockdowns hurting traders

Story protagonists: Alhaji Aminu Mainama (50) and Alhaji Hassan Dangiwa (62)
Gender: males
Tribe: Bakabe
Type of food sold: meat

The Covid-19 related lockdowns in Nigeria’s northwestern state of Kebbi has significantly shrunk the capital of market traders. This coupled with the low

purchasing power of residents poses a danger to the survival of businesses here.

Alhaji Aminu Mainama, a meat processor and seller in Birnin Kebbi, has recently found himself in a critical situation, which he said is attributed to the lockdown and the subsequent closure of the country's land borders.

According to him, in the past, on a daily basis his butcher stall would slaughter three cows and by 3pm they would have been sold. Now, they hardly sell half of a cow in an entire day.

"In the past I achieved a lot with the meat processing and selling business - I built houses, travelled to Saudi Arabia for pilgrimage, married, and trained my children in school—one of my children is schooling in the university while the other one is in school of nursing," Aminu Mainama said this in an interview at Birnin Kebbi Central Market, adding that, "No fewer than 10 people have learned this business from me and they are now on their own."

He noted that if they were able to finance modern cool rooms through soft loans, loans without interest, they would be able to improve the meat processing and selling business and better withstand shocks like the lockdowns. Aminu said that the border closing has made it difficult to bring in cows from neighboring countries and that fluctuations in the exchange rate has negatively impacted the purchasing power of both the buyer and the seller. Cool room would help these kinds of shocks.

Aminu Mainama said the lockdowns have "crippled us economically" in more ways than one. Some of his association members are now in disputes with the courts over non-payments. He mentioned a dealer who would buy and sell over 11 cows, but now, he hardly buys two. "Before now," he continues, "we slaughter 40 cows but now we hardly slaughter nine. These are the negative effects of Covid-19 on our business."

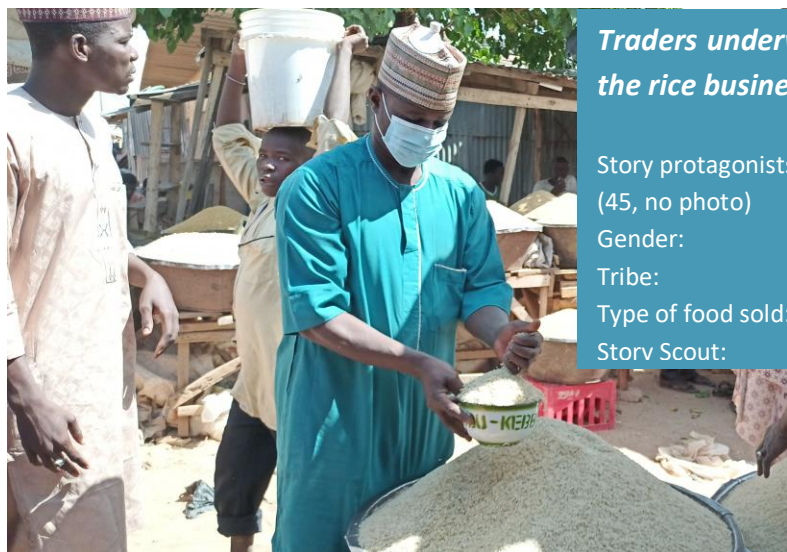
The chairman of meat processors and sellers in Kebbi State, Hassan Dangiwa, said Covid-19 has affected their business negatively, which resulted in a situation whereby some of them have pulled out of the business altogether, because they could not cope with the situation.

Dangiwa said their businesses are in a critical situation and need government interventions to salvage them from total collapse. While lamenting the situation, Dangiwa said in the past they used to slaughter 50 cows and over 100 goats in a day but now they hardly slaughter 5 cows and 15 goats and they hardly sell them, because people do not have the money to spend. "People hardly eat meat now."

“I know the ins and outs of this business, of meat processing and selling, because it is a business that I inherited from my father and my father inherited it from his father; so, you can see I am not an intruder in this business. I have trained and graduated over 100 people in this business of meat processing and selling,” he said.

In another part of the market, a palm oil seller named Francisca said the coronavirus lockdown has also affected her business negatively. She said the lockdown period of staying at home and not doing anything has exhausted her business capital. She said before the lockdown she would buy no less than 50 cans of palm oil to sell, but now she hardly buys 5 cans, because she has no money.

“I have been in this business for over 30 years, and I have trained and sponsored eight of my children in the university, and I trained some women who are doing well in this business of selling palm oil. Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown have really affected my business, because during the lockdown business became difficult, most people cannot settle their debts, and this led to a crisis,” she said.



Traders underwater: Heavy floods taking their toll on the rice business.

Story protagonists:	Sanusi Umar (40) and Abubakar Kalgo (45, no photo)
Gender:	males
Tribe:	Hausa
Type of food sold:	Rice
Story Scout:	Mustapha Muhammad

Sanusi Umar, 40, a rice trader in Birnin Kebbi’s Central Market is among many thousands of farmers who lost their farmland

to flooding last rainy season. Umar lost 3 hectares of rice farm to floods dashing his hope to boost his rice business at the market, similar to many rice traders and farmers in Kebbi.

Umar valued the 3 hectares into hundreds of thousands of naira, before he saw it washed away by the heavy downpours.

Umar said, “From Argungu to Gumza and Zuru, almost all of the farmers lost their rice farm to floods. I am also part of those that lost. I grew 3 hectares of land, but [it] washed away. I applied

fertilizer and everything that it needed. The farm looked great, but when I heard about the flooding, I visited the farm, [and] I saw it completely submerged in the water.” He added that, “the water stayed nearly three months on our farms. You see, you can’t expect anything from the farm; everything’s gone.”

“I started this business in my childhood when I helped my parents in the same business. It reached a stage that I buy the paddy myself from the villages and take it to the market and sell to retailers,” Umar said in an interview at Central Market, adding that, “ Now I have my own shop at the market, and customers buy from me.”

“I do sell not less than 20 sacks in a week or more depending on the availability of the rice in the market.”

He had planned to grow rice and mill it with the hopes to take it to his shop at Birnin Kebbi Central Market to expand his business and get more income, but now that income is buried completely in the water.

Umar’s plans have been shaken with this flood disaster, and now he’s in serious need of capital to close the gap.

“I need capital, so that I can purchase the rice in large quantities, because if you don’t have enough capital you cannot get enough supplies; I have a lot of customers, but the fact is the capital is not huge, and I can’t purchase enough.” Umar stated.

Bank loans are often shunned away by most of the northern Muslim traders, as the interest to be paid is against Islam. Islam does not allow Muslims to accept interest. At times, the government steps in with free interest loans to pave way for Muslim traders to benefit from the loan.

The majority of the hundreds of thousands of farmers in the region worst hit by the flooding are in Argungu and Gumza, among others; all in Kebbi state have had their hopes dashed, paving the way for more poverty. The dams and rivers could not hold the heavy downpour causing flooding in most of the states along the Kebbi river, but Kebbi, the land of pride of rice production, was worst hit.

Abubakar A Kalgo, a rice dealer at Kalgo market in Kebbi state, corroborated what Sanusi Umar said. To him, the flood was the most devastating in recent history of flooding in Kebbi State.

Those who used to harvest over 100 tons of rice could not get a single paddy from the farms. It was particularly challenging as farmers had predicted a bumper harvest before the disaster occurred.

“The paddy rice prices went up due to this flood disaster that caused huge losses. A lot of farmers lost. Some that used to cultivate 300 to 100-bags have not gotten a single paddy” Umar said.

The prices of the paddy have gone up in most of the rice markets in the state that produces rice that is sold all over Nigeria.

Sanusi Umar says when recounting the loss from the floods, “I got married to two wives and have four kids. I did it all with the money I earned from the rice paddy business. I feed them well, even help others,” Umar said, “my kids go to western and Islamic schools.”

All of this is happening in the context of the government ban on the importation of rice, done largely to increase domestic production. However, rice shortages have been difficult on the poor.

Sanusi Umar is hoping to get some loans from the government and plans to move ahead despite the challenges he faced.

“We need assistance. Now that I don’t have enough capital, I had to give my farm to someone to pay me; I don’t have enough money to cultivate again.”



Opportunity not realized: Poor storage facilities stifling onion business.

Story protagonists: Umar Dan Aya (52) and Muddassiru

Umar (35)

Gender: males

Tribe: Hausa

Type of food sold: onion, tomatoes, etc.

Story Scout: Mustapha Muhammad

Onion trading can be a profitable business, but it still suffers from poor storage facilities. You can see the onion packed in trucks ready to go to the south of the country and to neighboring countries like Ghana, Niger Republic, and Cote D'Ivoire among others.

Here in Kebbi, the non-availability of modern storage facilities to store and preserve onion and other horticultural products is a key issue bedeviling the farmers and traders in the northwestern state of Kebbi.

The local method to store onions is to place them on sand spread on the floor and to allow air to ventilate the area. Traders and farmers regularly check and remove the rotten ones, but they would prefer a storage facility with refrigeration and ventilation systems that would allow the onion to last much longer.

Umar Dan Aya, 52, in the business of buying and selling onions in Birnin Kebbi, said the business of onion is a profitable one but poor storage facilities cause the loss of a lot of money. He thinks it could be the reason why the commodity doesn't have a stable price.

He said they often have no other option but to use the local method of preservation and storage, which has its own negative effect on the commodity. They are calling on the government to come in and help them with modern facilities of storage.

"We travelled to Harasawa village to buy onion. The farmers there combine rain and irrigation farming for onion and tomatoes. I am happy with what I am doing, I have 4 children at primary and secondary schools while one is studying at Sokoto for higher education"

An onion supplier from Alerio market, the international onion market, Mudassiru Umar, 35, said onion has been a great commodity that's needed everywhere; but the issue is how to store it longer.

Mudassir Umar told us that he travelled as far as Kwanan Dangora, Bakori, Danja in Kano and Katsina states to buy onion and bring it to Birnin Kebbi to sell.

He said during the yuletide period (December) a bag of onion was sold at 40,000-naira last year, but now a bag is sold at 8,000 naira. This kind of fluctuation in price is typical and is all the more reason onion traders hope for better storage facilities.

“Our problem is storage and we will appreciate it if government can come in to help us with the modern storage facilities by way of soft loan to enable us to boost our business and built modern storage facilities to reduce the problem of incessant [volatility] in the price of the commodity,” said Mudassir Umar

“Onion has been transported outside the country to Ghana, Niger, Côte D’Ivoire among others,” adding that, “If the onion has no market outside the country I don’t know where we can store the onion we produce.”

A source at Alerio market stated that no fewer than 30 to 50 trucks daily packed with onion are being taken away to either Lagos, Port Harcourt in the south or exported to neighboring countries.

“If we can get a modern facility to store onions so it won’t spoil, we would have made a lot of profit. Many farmers don’t get much from cultivating onion, because they cannot store it to reach its peak in prices. It is lucrative if you can store onion for the time it gets scarce -- that’s when the prices double or even triple.”

ANALYSIS

The objective of deploying three different Story Scouts was to receive stories collected by people with different perspectives and different experiences. Abdul’s stories were full of local flavor and lighthearted, often humorous, vignettes. Madina’s stories, by and large, focused on positive angles to different and often difficult situations. As the one female Scout, she spoke with the most women vendors, and they opened up to her about gender issues they might have been less willing to share with a man. Mustapha, a long time BBC stringer, focused his stories on what might be considered “harder news.” As a result, many of his interviewees focused on sharing their personal challenges to issues beyond their control (flooding, pandemic and lockdowns) and pleaded for the government’s help, possibly assuming the stories will be published.

As a result, the collection of stories of food vendors gathered here provide a unique and rich landscape of life in the markets of Birnin Kebbi (see Figure 4). This landscape offers clues into broader trends of life as a vendor and instances of specific dramatic events in a vendor’s life.

Several themes emerged from these stories, which will be foundational in the creation of original stories that incorporate food safety messaging and behaviors for media interventions developed in Phase II of EatSafe.

Learning from errors

Dramatic accounts ranged from food poisoning of customers to overcooking cowheads and showcased ways vendors learn from errors to grow their businesses. These kinds of stories are, in a sense, tailor-made for behavior change media, in that we see the drama of a protagonist making the mistake and the resolution in the learning from it. One Scout even discovered a story of a food safety positive deviant, modelling effective food safety behavior. In that story, the vendor learned that his customers were getting sick because of how dirty his meat stall was. Despite not having extra resources relative to other vendors, he committed to the cleanliness of his vending stall and of his clothing. His story is an example of a positive character that could be modelled in EatSafe creative narratives. In an environment like Birnin Kebbi, positive deviance holds a lot of potential, particularly in the absence of significant infrastructure improvements throughout the market.

Service to others

Many of the stories focused on how the vendor helped someone else or how they were helped by others in critical situations. Although these kinds of stories are easy to embellish by the storyteller to place him/her in a better light, it is nonetheless notable that this kind of story seems to have currency amongst vendors and speaks to a type of story that could be effective in a behavior change context.

Resilience and motivation

It is not uncommon in a developing world context to find many stories of extreme resilience and people motivated to find a means to survive. That was no different here with vendors often telling stories of themselves overcoming hardships and finding paths forward to keep the business going. Powerful motivators are evident in how vendors talk about their business success enabling them to financially support their families, buy houses, take on multiple wives and have many children, and send their children to school. Pride and success in business is also a key motivator (see theme below).

Media aimed at food vendors could certainly use these kinds of ideas in any number of stories about the efforts vendors must take to stay afloat, the sacrifices they endure to make ends meet, and the motivating factors that help push them forward. In a food safety context, this is

particularly relevant since interventions will likely ask vendors to do something different--something that might add to the challenges associated with running their businesses.

Pride and success

Several vendors spoke proudly about business successes, family life, wives, houses built, children attending school, or their own enrollment in university. This pride was a motivating factor for vendors, as many took the effort to narrate entire life stories about hard work and hardships they endured on the way to success. The fact that vendors repeatedly referenced these kinds of accomplishments suggests pride and success could be potent elements of media programs. Keeping customers healthy, as another source of pride and success, could potentially have resonance with vendors as well. Tying food safety with business success might be another way to reach vendors

Occupational hazards

Several stories explored the existential threat certain types of occupational hazards have on a vendor's livelihood. For example, concerned about heat rashes from the cooking fires, one vendor sought to change his livelihood. In another example, highly noxious smoke inhalation negatively impacted the vendor's health. And in a third, notable example, the health risk posed was a result of traditional magic cast by a "spiritual doctor" on the vendor that fogged his mind and weakened his body. It's worth noting that the way the vendor broke free from the magic was by himself also visiting a spiritual doctor to get herbs that would counter the spell, and according to him, it worked. These kinds of stories have the potential to be very dramatic, which in certain kinds of media programming could be highly effective.

Reliance on the government for business help

A number of vendors shared stories about their need for capital in order to build infrastructure that would allow them to grow their businesses, and in some cases enter the export market. They noted that price fluctuations of certain commodities were highly volatile, which in turn, significantly impacted their bottom line. In almost all of these cases, vendors wanted the government to help with capital investment. Vendors need "soft" or no interest loans to construct facilities such as storage units and large-scale drying machines. Several noted that the government promised to make these improvements but has not come through. It is certainly possible that vendors stressed these stories to the Scout in hopes that it might help their efforts, but nonetheless, it does point to some key ideas for designers to consider during EatSafe Phase II. Stories about vendors having the drive to grow their business only to be slowed by government inaction is a narrative frame that would resonate with many vendors.

Beginning young

Unsurprisingly, many vendors told stories of beginning work in this field as children, either because it was what the family did or because they had to find the means to live. One Scout reported that child labor laws are rarely enforced in the region. For those who did not come from a family of vendors, stories about beginning young seemed to fall into one of two categories: figured it out alone or found a mentor who helped. In both instances, these were, in a sense, stories about struggle, but the vendors framed them in a way to highlight their successes and how they came from nothing or very little and made something out of it.

Seizing market advantage

The stories often revealed ways vendors seized a market advantage, such as using a donkey to carry the rice, wearing makeup or presenting a clear and neat look to attract customers, undercutting prices, or selling fishing gear along with the fish. Finding ways to capture market share could be effective in narrative communications around food safety. As interventions will likely include new behaviors, framing them as a way to grow the business could be quite germane for food vendors.

Religious norms and values

The stories show that religious norms and values play a key role in the life of many traders, which is not at all unexpected for this region of the world. Vendors often cited traveling for Hajj as one of their most important accomplishments. Some also cited Allah as the reason for both their safety on the insecure highways and also as the reason for the insecurity itself due to the unrepentant. In addition, as Islamic law disallows usury (riba), many vendors were reliant on soft, interest-free loans from the government for capital investments. EatSafe interventions should consider religious norms and values as driving motivators to many social and business interactions. Naturally weaving them into stories will likely help to provide a more authentic context.

Women in the market

Female vendors were the main protagonists of several stories. In some instances, *why* women were working *was* the story. Some examples include (A) two young Hausa women, not yet married, who were allowed by their families to sell at the market to support the family; (B) a widowed Hausa woman forced to work to support herself and (C) Fulani women who sold milk at the market, as is often expected of Fulani women living in rural areas.

However, even when not the main story protagonists, women in their roles as wives or mothers were often present in the vendors' stories. For example, we learned of husbands consulting their wives before making business decisions and experiencing psychological stress when not having their wives' support. We saw a mother who sent her very young son into the market to learn the trade. We learned of widows reliant on others due to having no sons and their daughters being married off to other families. Finally, we learned that many vendors consider it a success to marry multiple wives and provide for them and their children. It is clear that women are an integral part of the vendor community even if they do not play a central role in selling food. This will be key to consider during the development of interventions and media programs.

- A rookie meat vendor makes first mistakes and loses money - burns the skin of a cow too deeply / tries to split the head open and can't.
- Every morning, a Fulani woman "enters a race" against her calves to "steal" their milk.
- Meat vendors until recently burned tires to create smoke needed for processing meat.
- Tomato vendor says "Sharp-Sharp" to customers to hurry them up so other customers don't have to wait too long.
- Vendor has 25 children and does not remember their names.
- Sisters take their small brother along when selling rice door to door so that he learns the business.
- Fisherman finds himself in deep water, face-to-face with a hippo, and fighting an alligator.
- Vendor wakes up to bulldozers clearing his vending site to make a road.
- A young girl takes off hijab to fight someone who stole from her friend in the market, to the displeasure of her father. The father bans her from returning to the market, but only for a while as she is the main provider for the family.
- Jealous vendor uses magic to harm a more successful vendor, making him miscalculate prices and fall ill.
- Pregnant woman is heard crying and walked to the hospital by orphaned boys (Almajiri) while her husband is away.
- Vendor mentors Almajiri boys to become vendors themselves.
- Young unmarried Hausa women put on lots of makeup in effort to attract more customers.
- A vendor takes up exciting business opportunities upon receiving a soft loan from the government.
- Young Hausa girl plans to buy a rice mill to speed up the process of bringing her rice to the market.
- Severe flooding washes away entire rice paddies and with them lots of profit.
- Vendors of different commodities often tease each other in a humorous way (meat vs fish vendors, salt vs cola nut vendors).
- Vendors huddle together to listen to the radio.
- One's business becomes part of one's name, otherwise people wouldn't know who you are talking about. For example, "Kifi" is Fish. "Mai Kifi" means owner of fish.

Figure 4: Sampling of rich details from stories that could be used in narrative communications

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERVENTION DESIGN UNDER EATSAFE

EatSafe aims to generate evidence and knowledge on leveraging the potential for increased consumer demand for safe food to substantially improve the safety of nutritious foods in informal market settings. Central to EatSafe's work is understanding (and potentially shaping) the motivations, attitudes, beliefs, and practices of consumers and food vendors.

Recommendations for EatSafe interventions targeting food vendors, flowing from the results of Story Sourcing (Activity 1.8), include the following:

(1) Create communications that build on the themes emerging from vendors' stories. These themes provide context for the development of immersive stories and identifiable characters for the food market vendor audience.

- *Learning from errors.* This theme could be effective for behavior change narratives where characters model safe food behavior. This holds potential particularly in the absence of significant infrastructure improvement throughout the market.
- *Service to others.* Stories about service to others have currency with the vendor community and could be effective in a food safety context where protecting the consumer is a variable.
- *Resilience and motivation.* Vendors shared many stories of resilience and motivation to improve their businesses. In a food safety context, this is particularly relevant since interventions will likely ask vendors to do something different -- something that might add to the challenges associated with running their businesses.
- *Pride and success.* Pride and success seem to be motivating factors for vendors, which suggests that these could be potent elements in food safety messaging and behaviors. Keeping customers healthy, as another source of pride and success, could potentially have resonance with vendors. Tying food safety with business success might be another way to reach vendors as well.
- *Occupational hazards.* Stories featuring occupational hazards (e.g., burned in a fire, cursed by a jealous competitor) have the potential to be very dramatic, which in certain kinds of media programming could be highly effective at capturing the audience's attention.
- *Reliance on the government for business help.* Many vendors described their ideas and readiness to expand their business being hindered by various constraints such as lack of infrastructure improvements or unavailability of interest-free capital investments from the government. This tension provides a useful background for narratives, particularly when addressing infrastructure-related food safety concerns.

- *Seizing market advantage.* Vendors are highly adaptable and are looking for ways to strengthen business and increase sales. These traits could be of great value in stories about building a safe food environment.
- *Religious norms and values.* Religious norms and values organize community life. These should be highlighted in key narratives about vendors and around food safety.
- *Women in the market.* Although women might not be the primary sellers at the market, the role of women in the life of a vendor is often significant and should be woven into media and narratives about food vendors.

(2) Taken as a whole, these stories provide a broad picture of life as a market vendor. Future Story Sourcing activities should continue to involve multiple Scouts of different backgrounds to provide a rich and full picture of the target audience.

(3) Given anecdotal information Scouts collected from vendors about how they receive news, entertainment, and information, EatSafe should consider radio programming and collaboration with respected vendors as potentially effective channels for reaching market vendors with food safety messaging. Additionally, for captive audience occasions, for example, during an in-person training session about food safety, video could be used as a channel to model effective behaviors and the impacts of those behaviors.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: A GUIDE FOR SBCC

**EatSafe: Evidence and Action Towards Safe,
Nutritious Food**

**Story Sourcing: A Guide for SBCC
Media Producers and Story Scouts**

September 2020

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ACRONYMS

Below is a list of all acronyms and abbreviations used in the report.

PM - Pierce Mill Entertainment & Education

SBCC - Social and Behavior Change Communication

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Story Sourcing is the semi-formal process that uses journalistic techniques to gather stories directly from the audience of interest. Story Sourcing will be implemented in selected EatSafe locations to discover compelling and relatable stories among market vendors to help build engaging and culturally relevant SBCC media interventions with and for market vendors.

This guide outlines the Story Sourcing process and details the key roles SBCC media Producers and Story Scouts play in executing it effectively. It defines the logistical components of Story Sourcing, as well as core principles and commitments that direct the work. This guide is shared with local Story Scouts and SBCC Producers at the onset of Story Sourcing in order to focus the team around the same purpose and method.

While the guide provides the general process for Story Sourcing, each Story Sourcing location requires tailoring the process to meet local requirements, customs, attitudes, and mores. The guide includes a localization worksheet in Appendix 1, which Scouts, Producers, and Partners work on together.

I. INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS STORY SOURCING

Stories are the core of any Pierce Mill Media (PM) social and behavior change communication (SBCC) production. For media to have impact on an audience, it must resonate with them and be based on ideas and themes that have cultural meaning to them. An audience must identify with the characters—not necessarily by way of characteristics, but by way of identifiable actions. Using media for behavior change requires that the stories open up the audience’s imagination to the possible. The discovery of these kinds of stories is at the heart of Story Sourcing.

Story Sourcing is a semi-formal process that uses journalistic techniques to gather stories directly from the audience of interest. Story Sourcing provides audience anecdotes from daily life at home, at work, and within the community to guide the writing and design of compelling and memorable SBCC media.

As an SBCC tool, Story Sourcing is always part of a larger effort to identify the core messages and behaviors that the program is attempting to communicate. Good stories—which PM defines as stories that resonate with an audience—anchor the media programming and can open up an audience to key messaging that leads to intention to change behavior and ultimately behavior change.

Stories are found everywhere and stories that are best for the intervention might or might not be stories that focus on the subject matter. What is important is to find resonant stories to serve as the basis for scripts and then subtly weave the messaging into those scripts.

Stories can often be found in the answers to broad cultural and sociological questions: What are the local political and personal dynamics that influence behavior? Are there any cultural touchpoints that are important—movies, dances, plays...why? What role does religion play in someone's life? Folklore? What are various perceptions, beliefs, superstitions throughout a community? Where do people get their news? How do they manage their money? Answers to questions like these often lead to anecdotes about community dynamics: a story about how life was impacted during the dry or wet season and how the community responded, a beloved folktale told to children, favorite films and why, stories of how religion influences daily life.

In addition, speaking directly with the audience helps uncover how media is consumed. What channels reach people? How is information shared within the community? And what level of media consumption exists?

For any SBCC media program to be effective or have impact, the media itself must be designed for and to some extent by the target audience. Story Sourcing helps make that possible.

2. KEY STORY SOURCING PLAYERS

The Story Sourcing process generally includes four types of groups:

- Producers
- Story Scouts
- Interviewees/story sources
- Partner organizations

2.1 Producers

The Producers oversee the Story Sourcing process. As they will ultimately be using the stories resulting from the process to develop the media intervention/s, the Producers ensure that the output is useful and usable. They approach the Story Sourcing process strategically, ensure that all those involved stay on track, and can course correct or adjust the process based on the needs of the specific situation. The Producers are responsible for finding and hiring the Story Scouts, and for managing interactions with all the involved groups.

2.2 Story Scouts

Story Sourcing is done by Story Scouts. Scouts are country nationals familiar with the audience to some extent. Scouts should not be an authority figure or a contentious figure. We engage a person who encourages trust and possesses an ability to draw out stories naturally and respectfully in interviewees. The Scout speaks the local language and ideally is a local him or herself.

An effective approach is to draw on local journalists or writers to conduct this work, as their skill sets for uncovering stories are of high value to the process. Scouts are innately curious and approach the work without judgment or preconceptions. They listen closely to what is being said and follow the lead of the interviewee in an open and unthreatening manner. Scouts detect patterns in the ideas, themes, and topics, and they home in on ideas that seem most relevant to the program's goals.

2.3 Interviewees/Story Sources

The heart of the Story Sourcing process is found in the people who share their own stories with the Story Scouts. Generally, the interviewees are members of the audience for whom the SBCC program is being developed — those whose knowledge, attitudes and behaviors the program is looking to positively influence. They are locals whose stories will be reflected in the SBCC storytelling program. The goal is to discover stories that can serve as foundations for the media intervention/s—narratively, thematically, and tonally. The aim is to create realistic media that resonate with the audience and is filled with identifiable characters and compelling stories.

2.4 Partner Organizations

SBCC projects are usually a cross-disciplinary endeavor, involving multiple organizations. The Producers may be based within a specific organization or hired as independent consultants for a particular project. Funding may come from a variety of governmental or NGO sources, and the funders often have some say in the program goals and how the Producers are to achieve them. In addition, the Producers may choose to partner with local leaders or organizations, such as journalism schools, local universities, or media outlets to facilitate finding appropriate Story Scouts and to help secure access to potential local interviewees. Patronage or involvement of a local institution (e.g., a university) might or might not make the target audience more receptive to the Story Sourcing project and is considered at the outset of the project.

3. GUIDELINES FOR PRODUCERS

In the Story Sourcing process, Producers are responsible for the overall planning and implementation, as well as processing Scout write-ups to prepare them to be used at the design meeting and during the writing process. In addition to having a strong understanding of story development and media programs, the Producer should have a solid grasp of the overall goals of the larger program and key principles around SBCC.

3.1 Planning a Story Sourcing Project

Story Sourcing must be done in a strategic manner to ensure that the ultimate outcomes will achieve the program's goals. Before jumping into gathering stories, develop a strategy and logistical plan to be sure you get what you need for success. Consider the following elements as you create your plan.

3.1.1 Objectives

The Producer should remember that the goal of Story Sourcing is to discover compelling and culturally relevant stories about people within the community.

As such, the Story Sourcing process starts by the Producer/s and Scout/s working together to localize this process, so that collected stories have a direct or indirect connection to the goals of the particular SBCC media intervention.

These real-life stories will form the foundation for the fictional stories that drive the media interventions. Eventually, during scripting and production, programmatic messages and specific behaviors will be woven into the intervention story/s

3.1.2 Interviewees

Identify the priority audiences for your SBCC project as specifically as possible. Whose behaviors are you working to influence? You may have different groups, or subgroups within a larger audience, who play different roles in the behavior change big picture and require different approaches. Collecting stories from individuals who are members of the project's audience will enable the production to reflect aspects of their own lives back to them, making the characters and events in the production familiar and relatable. In addition to interviewing priority audience members, consider speaking with others who influence them, or who surround them in their day-to-day lives. These individuals can help to provide context and stories that your audience see play out around them, even if they are not in the primary group you are trying to reach. Think about shopkeepers, teachers, religious leaders and others who might have stories that include or are relevant to your audience.

3.1.3 Locations

Based on what you know about the target behaviors and your priority audiences, and in conjunction with program partners, determine what types of locations and community settings are most relevant for seeking stories. If your project covers a broad geographical area, you will likely need to assign a number of Story Scouts to different communities that are representative of where your priority audiences live and work. Consider where they tend to spend their time and whether those places might provide an interesting backdrop for elements of the production/s. These settings might include the marketplace, a health care clinic, a street corner hangout, a police station, barbershop or salon, empty restaurant or café, a community center – people in all of these places will have relevant stories unique to each context. Local organizational partners or consultants will likely be able to direct you to typical locales where your audience spends time. Do some background research - review social media, look for local social media groups, news articles, YouTube videos.

3.1.4 Finding Story Scouts

PM finds Story Scouts among local journalists, media houses, and writers, or from members of the target audience who have the required skills. They may be identified and approached via personal relationships with local consultants to the project, journalism programs at local universities, job boards, or community

media outlets. PM works in close coordination with program consultants familiar with the local communities to identify resources and potential candidates during the recruitment phase. The cultural, linguistic and social knowledge brought by the Story Scouts is invaluable for localizing the Story Sourcing process, increasing the likelihood of participation by interviewees, and ensuring that the resulting stories are understood in context.

This project depends on hiring Scouts who have a great eye and ear for compelling stories, and who love talking with people about their lives. People will “open up” during an interview, they will tell what they honestly think and feel, only if they trust that the interviewer cares about what they think. If the Scout is faking interest, the interviewees will sense it, and they will be likely to “shut down”: they will give only brief, superficial answers to the questions. They might tell the Scout only what they think he/she wants to hear.

It is important to hire Scouts for this project who will not judge the people they interview based on their identities or backgrounds. The project needs Scouts who will not “look down” on people who, for example, do not have any or much schooling, or come from another ethnic or religious group, or who are poorer. The Scout needs to be the type of person who values everyone’s points of view and stories - whether the interviewee is a powerful government official or subsistence farmer, whether that person has an Oxford PhD or never went to school at all. We believe that every person’s stories are important.

Gender of the Scout might also be a consideration. When the interviewees are explicitly women, they might share their stories more freely and honestly if the journalist is also a woman. It is sometimes tougher to predict how men will react when they are interviewed: depending on the culture, men might also open up more with female interviewers - but maybe not. It does not mean that journalists of another gender cannot get great interviews; it is just one more factor to consider when you are hiring the journalists and localizing the Story Sourcing process (see Appendix 1).

Scouts collaborate closely with and are guided by program Producers, but also need to be able to work independently to discover people’s stories. Scouts need to have the technical capabilities to collect audio and video stories, as well as basic edits of audio and video files. Ideally, they should live within the community they are assigned to, or at least be familiar with the area, and speak the local language in order to be most effective.

Typically, we engage one Scout within a defined geographical area or specific community. The final number of Scouts depends entirely on the audience and the needed scope for a given project. In general, PM avoids to the fullest extent possible different Scouts talking to the same person, which is why it is best not to assign more than one Scout to the same geographic area. On average, each Scout spends about two to five days in the field collecting stories, depending upon the number of different priority audiences and contexts identified as of interest.

When calculating the number of Scouts to engage for the project, take into consideration the following variables:

- Number of days of Scout labor that can be covered by the budget, based on the appropriate local daily rate and estimated number of days per Scout engagement
- Number of communities that need to be included to get a representative range of types of interviewees
- Number of different priority audiences and/or contexts to be included in interviews
- Access to the location

There is not one perfect answer for the recommended number of Scouts, or the number of interviews conducted. Essentially, Producers will need to use their judgment, in collaboration with the Scouts, as to when they have found a sufficient variety of good stories across communities.

The budget for the Scouts' activities needs to take into account their labor beyond just their time spent interviewing. In addition to their days spent in the field recording stories, you will also need to build in time for onboarding, background research, daily reports and the Story Sourcing Write-Up at the end of their engagement.

3.1.5 Story Collection Methods

The ideal method for Story Sourcing is journalistic in-person interviews, conducted in a private and quiet location. However, given that conditions in the field are often unpredictable for various reasons, the plan should take into account that contingencies may require improvisation and adaptation. For example, during a disease outbreak such as COVID-19, social distancing requirements may dictate that interviews be conducted remotely, via phone or videoconferencing. Introductions via partner organizations might be more appropriate for identifying potential interviewees, rather than walking around and approaching people directly. Other issues such as time or budgetary constraints may restrict the number of interviews or distance of travel that Scouts engage in to meet with interviewees.

Depending upon specific project needs or constraints, the Producers may plan for using various options for collecting stories beyond the in-depth one-on-one interview. This might include shorter, informal conversations one-on-one or in a group, which might happen organically as the Scout walks around and happens upon people who may fit the selection criteria, but who are not interested or able to take the time to be formally interviewed.

Observations are another supplementary method of finding stories by watching interactions among people or absorbing the atmosphere of a location. In some cases, the Scout may see an interesting story playing out in real time, such as a negotiation or argument between vendors, or a religious celebration, that can be reported from the Scout's own first-person perspective.

A more formal method of drawing out location-based stories is type of a "transect walk," a participatory exercise in which members of the community walk with the Scout through a particular area, and talk along the way, answering questions and telling relevant stories related to what they are seeing.

The Producers will need to specify which methods the Scout is to use, adapting the requirements to the particular environment and relevant constraints.

3.1.6 Interviewee Incentives

The Story Sourcing budget should include a plan for distributing “thank you” gifts—either in the form of money, phone credits, or physical items—to the interviewees to thank them for their participation. These “thank you” gifts should be appropriate to the local culture, with a value sufficient to compensate the interviewees for their time invested. In some cases, participants will be interviewed at their workplaces and possibly lose out on earnings from customers, so the amount should be enough to make them feel that the trade-off is worthwhile. Because some interactions may be of shorter duration and less formal than an interview, consider having available gifts of different values.

Because people may not be easily found again after the interview or conversation, let them know about the incentive up front and present it to them as the interview concludes. In some cases, such as with individuals with whom Scouts develop an ongoing relationship and multiple conversations, it may make sense to provide the gift to them at the end of the Story Sourcing process. Local partner organizations may also merit receiving a thank you gift or honorarium if they put in time to help with the project.

3.2 Implementing the Story Sourcing Process

3.2.1 Localizing the Process

The general Story Sourcing process you are reading is an overall guide to Story Sourcing. However, for every project, it will need to be adapted to the specific context and location. This localized process is created first by the Producer/s (often in consultation with Partner Organizations) to account for the program budget and goals, and then jointly with the Scout(s) to customize the plan based on their knowledge of the language, culture and target audience.

Consider whether each of the following components of the general process needs to be localized for a particular project and location:

- **Specifications for the Story Scouts’ credentials and background** – Scouts may need specific language abilities and/or knowledge of a particular local culture or subculture. Also, in some places, journalists or writers may be rare, so the program may need to broaden the requirements.
- **Potential partner organizations** – In cases where there is no local university or news institutions, other respected community organizations may serve as the intermediary to help find Story Scouts and interviewees. Consider community associations by faith, vocation.
- **Conduct and Ethics Code** – Local customs and culture may require the guidelines to be clarified when they are in conflict with the Pierce Mill Code of Conduct.
- **Safety measures** - In a potentially dangerous security situation, the process may necessitate, for example, Scouts working in pairs, or staying away from particular locations, or providing Scouts with lists of locations of hospitals and police stations or the distance to the airport.
- **Working with the Scouts** – Local attitudes toward work or interacting with an employer may require very clear guidance regarding expectations for when/where an interview might take place.

- **Interview questions** – specific questions need to be asked, or themes explored, based on programmatic goals.
- **Specific characteristics of interviewees** – The program’s objectives and priority audiences will guide the types of people to speak with.
- **Approaching potential interviewees** – Cultural norms may dictate how the Scouts reach out and interact with sources (for example, the etiquette for a man speaking with a woman to whom he is not related or that certain locations are not appropriate for all to enter).
- **Social interactions** (e.g., trust and rapport, asking questions, drawing out stories) – The words used, and the way people speak to each other often follow specific cultural norms and etiquette, and may vary based on the person’s age, gender, position in the community, dress code, and other factors.
- **Story collection methods** – In certain circumstances, an in-person interview will not be possible, and the project will need to make adaptations, such as remote phone or video interviews.
- **Interviewee incentives** – Appropriate types of gifts, their monetary value, and how they are presented may all need to be adapted to the local context.
- **Choosing good stories** – Some stories may require the Scout to provide more context as to why they were significant, which may not be obvious to someone from a different culture.
- **Logistics and timing considerations** - Days and times: What is appropriate? Buffer time. Basic Logistics: Access to money? Will the Scout carry cash, electronic money? Are there banks around? Travel Logistics: Schedule of local transport or private transport, alternative lodging.

3.2.2 *Overseeing the Story Scouts*

The Producer will conduct the onboarding of Story Scouts who are hired in each community or region, in person when possible, but online tools make onboarding possible when in-person is not logistically feasible or is too expensive. The onboarding session sets guidance and expectations for the Scouts and how they will carry out their duties.

The onboarding meeting covers the following topics:

- Program goals and details
- Results of program research activities, if available, to give the Scouts context for their questions
- Overview of Story Sourcing
- Training on the Story Sourcing process
- Discussion of how to best localize the Story Sourcing process
- Communications
- Next steps and timelines

As the Scouts conduct their Story Sourcing activities, they will compile the best stories each day and upload the compilation as well as the raw audio for each individual interview to their personal folder

within PM's file collection system via Dropbox with summaries of the selected best stories and a daily reflection sheet with thoughts on the results for that day.

The Producer will review the submissions for each day and check in with each Scout after each scouting session to continually refine the process in the local context. The Scouts will update the Producer on their progress and any need for process changes. If there has been any deviation from the Story Sourcing process, the Scout will discuss this and provide the justification. The check-ins also serve as an opportunity to debrief, discuss stories, brainstorm new directions and opportunities for stories—in a sense, a scouting strategy review. In addition, text applications, such as What's App, are often fast and effective tools for Producer-Scout communications, particularly when in the field or when an immediate response is needed.

As the Producer engages in this ongoing review process with each Scout, they will be building a picture of the range of stories secured to date. The Producer should take into account the topics covered, different types of people from the priority audiences and elsewhere represented, and the quality and usefulness of the stories within the context of the overall SBCC program objectives. If there are specific gaps that the Producer sees, they can direct the Scout to focus efforts on obtaining stories on a particular topic or from a specific audience. The duration of the Story Sourcing phase will vary depending upon how many Scouts are working simultaneously, their effectiveness in gathering stories, and project budget.

At the end of Story Sourcing, each Scout will be responsible for creating a Story Sourcing Write-Up that highlights the best stories they collected, common themes that emerged, issues of note about the process, and other observations. The Producer and Scout will meet to discuss the report and its findings.

If desired, the Scouts can be included in reviewing and commenting on written drafts of program design and scripts.

3.3 Processing Collected Stories

During and after the Story Sourcing phase, the Producer will be responsible for reviewing the stories that are provided by the Scouts and organizing them in a way that makes them easy to reference and draw on during the design and scriptwriting phase.

3.3.1 Cataloging Stories

As the Story Scouts submit their daily compilation of stories, story summaries, and reflections, the Producer will review them on an ongoing basis to help guide the Scout's work as needed. The materials will be catalogued digitally to make it easy to see what has been submitted and to retrieve specific stories easily.

A real-time tracking document or database will be created to hold all the information and files in a user-friendly fashion. A basic collaborative database like Airtable (or a Google form/spreadsheet) will be set up and kept as up to date as possible. As the Scouts add each audio/video file, story summaries and reflection sheets to the database they will be available for viewing. As a Producer reviews each story, they should add any additional thoughts or comments about the story and how it might be used. Should it be needed, the Producer/s can commission transcription and translation of selected stories.

3.3.2 *Creating a Story Sourcing Report*

The Producer will consolidate the Story Sourcing Write-Ups submitted by the Scouts into a single report. This document will be a key resource used by Producers, Writers and SBCC personnel as they lay out the media intervention plotline, script and production. The report will summarize general observations about the priority audiences, their environment, the community, and recurring themes. It will also highlight the most compelling stories that emerged from the process, with background on those who told the stories (being sure not to include potentially identifying information).

The Story Sourcing Report serves as input into media program design and will be used to draw on ideas for developing:

- Characters
- Plotline
- Dialogue
- Settings
- Overall themes
- Local “color”
- Backstories
- Background events
- Other elements of the script or production
- Issues to avoid. Potential problems.
- Budgeting/Security concerns

4. GUIDELINES FOR STORY SCOUTS

When you as a Story Scout receive permission to interview someone, it is a privilege. Interviewing people also places a profound responsibility on a Scout. It is important to handle a person’s personal thoughts, feelings, and stories with respect and to report them accurately and in strict confidence.

The project will use stories that you gather in your interviews as the basis for media programs for local communities in the region. Those fictionalized stories need to ring true if they are going to capture the viewers’ imaginations and resonate with their own lives.

This section provides guidance to those who are hired as Story Scouts for how to go about the Story Sourcing process and reviews some strategies, which might already be familiar to you, of drawing out compelling stories and ideas.

4.1 **Ground Rules**

When working as a Story Scout, you are representing Pierce Mill and our partners. This means you must uphold certain standards and values while on the job.

4.1.1 *Conduct and Ethics*

PM has a strict Code of Conduct and Ethics founded on a commitment to integrity, honesty, clear thinking, confidentiality, and human rights. All Story Scouts will receive the full document in advance of scouting and will be required to review and sign to commit to the same values while Story Sourcing.

4.1.2 *Safety*

Your health, safety and security while working with PM is of paramount importance to us. Before you begin, you will receive PM's Safety, Security and Crisis Management Policy for review. When you are out in the field Story Sourcing, keep in mind that your life is more valuable than getting the story or protecting PM's or your property. Do not put yourself in danger. Withdraw from any situation that you feel poses an unreasonable risk.

4.1.3 *Privacy*

You are responsible for maintaining the privacy of the people you interview or speak with informally while Story Sourcing. They are trusting you with personal information, and you must be careful not to betray that trust. This means not sharing an interviewee's name, personal identifying information or story details with others outside of project staff. Story details will not be connected with the person's name once the interviews have undergone initial processing by the Story Scout and Producers. Each interviewee will either be assigned an identification number or a pseudonym to maintain their privacy.

4.2 **Acting as a Journalist**

You were selected as a Story Scout for this project because you have the journalistic skills needed to find sources and draw out relevant stories. We value your experience, professionalism, and intuition.

4.2.1 *Key Principles*

As a journalist, you bring an important perspective to gathering and processing stories and have an obligation to maintain your journalistic integrity. Some core principles to remember are:

1. First, do no harm

Understand your role as a journalist, which is distinct from that of judge, jury, researcher or historian. Your task is to discover information for public benefit. This is why journalists *publish*, as their mission is public. This means they have a duty to respect their sources' privacy, which is not subject to public exposure absent an overriding public purpose.

2. Be truthful

Neither waive necessary inquiries nor exaggerate for the sake of a good story. Any evidence that sources or stories were misrepresented is a cause for dismissal. More importantly, exaggerated or false stories are antithetical to the entire undertaking.

3. Be humble

Sure, you are seeking the truth. But know that there is a difference between truth and absolute truth, which your reporting is unlikely to achieve. Again, we are not judges or attorneys. We lack the authority to interrogate and summon witnesses under oath. We are subject to err in our

assessments and reporting, and must be ever ready for corrections, clarifications, retractions and apologies.

4.2.2 *Bring Your Skills*

In your work as a Scout, you will be using the skills you have developed as a journalist to discover and report the compelling stories that people have experienced in their day-to-day lives. These journalistic skills include:

- Knowing your audience
The way to identify the most interesting stories for the project (or ask meaningful questions) is to always have your audience in mind. In that way, you connect the information you seek and the information you have winnowed to the ultimate consumer of that information. A good journalist always keeps this connection at the forefront.
- Finding out what unites your sources
Journalists must be alert to patterns. When each source points to the same phenomenon as significant, you will have uncovered an important finding, trend or generalization.
- Finding out what distinguishes them
Every person, story or subject is unique in some way. It is within these interpersonal, interdisciplinary or intercultural differences that you will find the person, subject or entity's unique contribution.
- Listening actively
If you are busy thinking about the next thing that you intend to say, you cannot fully absorb what your interviewee is trying to say. Forming your next question *is* appropriate when you feel you have exhausted the value (for your ultimate audience) of your interviewee's current discourse.

4.2.3 *Defining "Stories"*

The Story Sourcing process may be a bit different from what you are used to as a journalist or writer. That is because the purpose of the stories you will be collecting here is to spark ideas and creativity during the SBCC program production process. The result will be the development of new stories that are based on the truth of the interviewees' lived experience, as told by many different people. We want you to dig deep, but the point is not to "expose" someone or make news, but to gather narrative building blocks.

Your job here is not to provide a full picture of a social phenomenon or an ethnographic study of a community. Rather, it is to uncover scenes and situations that are typical of life in the community, but that also may include some kind of conflict, theme, or emotion within them. These stories are stand-alone in and of themselves – the kind of anecdote one might tell a friend. As this is not a research study, the stories do not need to be gathered together into a broader narrative, at least at this stage of the process. We are looking for vivid descriptions of various situations that people have been in, that could be used as a kernel of a new idea or scenario.

4.3 Approaching Potential Interviewees

4.3.1 Selection Criteria

Based on considerations determined by the Producers, the people you approach to interview will likely come from the project's priority audiences and from people in the locations that have been determined to be relevant to the project's objectives. The Producers will provide you with information on desired demographics to look for, such as age, gender, and ethnicity, as well as people who are serving in specific roles, for example food vendors.

In addition to selection criteria, there are reasons why you would exclude certain people as interview candidates. If they do not speak the same language as the Story Scout, an interview will be quite difficult, unless Story Scouts work with a translator. Interviewees must also be able to provide informed consent that they understand the purpose of the interview and must have the legal capacity for decision making on their own behalf. For example, someone who is intoxicated on drugs or alcohol, a person with mental disabilities, or a minor likely would not meet those criteria. If minor children are among the project's priority audiences, additional safeguards will need to be put in place to obtain consent of the child's parent or guardian prior to speaking with them.

4.3.2 Approaching and Screening Potential Interviewees

In general, interviewees will be identified in one of four ways: (1) referral from a partner organization or individual contact, (2) spending time in an area where people fitting the selection criteria are likely to be found, (3) discovering interviewees through reviewing social media, past TV and newspaper reporting, and/or (4) recommendation from other interviewees (i.e., snowball sampling). In the first case, the referring organization or individual will generally know what type of people you are looking to speak with and make introductions or provide contact information. The second case requires the Scout to visually identify people who may fit the criteria and approach them via a conversation. Introduce yourself to the potential interviewees and tell them a bit about the project and the type of people you would like to speak with. Ask if they fit the criteria (if not obvious), and if not, whether they know someone they could recommend. The third case requires the Scout to do some research in advance, online, in the library, or by getting in touch with local media organizations. Finally, when following a recommendation from another interviewee, make sure to mention that to the recommended person as you introduce yourself.

When screening potential interviewees, don't discount persons who are less talkative or shy. They might still have good stories and be willing to share them.

Let potential interviewees and partner organizations know about the thank-you gift that is being offered to thank them for their participation, but it should not be used as a "bribe" to coerce them if they are clearly not comfortable being interviewed.

4.3.3 Establishing Trust and Rapport

The ability to put people at ease is an important skill in Story Sourcing, as it encourages them to open up and share details about their lives. While conversational small talk and friendly interactions come naturally to some people, others need to work at building that necessary baseline of trust. The exact methods for achieving this may differ between cultures and locations, but it comes down to making sure the interviewee is comfortable and believes you will not be judging them for what they tell you.

Some tips for achieving this rapport with the interviewee from the beginning include the following. (This is just an illustrative list. Every journalist has a different style of interviewing, depending on their personality. This list is not exhaustive and might not be appropriate for all contexts):

- Find areas of commonality between the two of you – e.g., favorite sports teams, children of the same age, a love of fishing, etc.
- Help them understand how their community will benefit from their participation
- Re-introduce previously mentioned details – such as the names or ages of the interviewee’s children or institutions with which the interviewee is affiliated. This shows you have been paying attention, and care.

It’s important to think about the way you approach each interview. For instance, how long will you need to spend with each person? It varies, but don’t think “Oh, maybe 10 or 20 minutes.” Think more like at least one hour, or more. An hour?

Yes. People *usually* get nervous when someone starts asking them questions, especially if that someone is a stranger. People can get especially nervous if that person is an “outsider,” from another region or ethnic or religious group. So, you need to spend time with each person you interview, to get past these obstacles to help that person to relax. That’s the only way the person you’re interviewing will trust you and “open up,” and tell you real and compelling stories that are actually going on in their lives.

4.3.4 Securing Informed Consent and Personal Information

It is important that the people you are collecting stories from understand their rights in the process and receive necessary protections. While you do not need to have them sign a formal informed consent form, they do need to give permission to have their stories recorded and potentially used within the project. Be sure to record their verbal consent at the beginning of the interview.

In addition to getting their consent, we need to collect their name and contact information in case we need to follow up. If the interviewee is not comfortable sharing their real name, they can have the option of choosing a pseudonym to use for the purposes of the interview. As you report on each interview at the end of the day (see Section 3.5 below), assign each interviewee an ID# using the numbering system given to you by the Producer.

At the conclusion of the interview or series of interviews with a person, be sure to provide them with the appropriate “Thank You” gift, as determined by the Producers.

4.4 Collecting Stories

The crux of the Story Sourcing process is in the actual interviews and conversations that provide the opportunity for stories to emerge.

We want to hear detailed, personal stories – not strings of facts, but stories – that shed light on how the target audience and other people in the community live their lives every day. We want the people you interview to share stories in as much detail as possible.

4.4.1 Recording the Interviews

Prior to starting the interview process, assess what device(s) you will use to record the interviews. You can use a mobile phone, many of which can be loaded with a voice recorder app to facilitate the recording. Other options are a digital video camera, a tablet with a microphone, or a standalone digital recorder. The device should be small enough to be easily kept on hand to pull out quickly as needed. Do not use a non-digital option, such as a microcassette recorder, because the files will need to be edited and uploaded digitally. You may also want to take notes during or immediately after the interview to highlight key points, jot down ideas, and serve as a rough backup in case you experience technical problems with the recording. If interviewee agrees, take a series of varying photos of her or him and the setting to provide additional documentation and context for the Producer.

Often, when speaking with people in the field, the logistics make it difficult to get a good quality recording. Be sure to hold the microphone up close to the person speaking. When meeting and talking with people in crowded noisy locations, such as a marketplace or by a busy road, you should do some advance scouting to have some ideas of nearby places you can go with the interviewee, if at all feasible, that will provide some privacy and shelter from the noise to be able to talk and be heard more easily.

For remote interviews, platforms such as Zoom, Skype or WhatsApp are often free and easy to use. Though many people you likely will want to interview may not have a computer, they may very well have a smartphone they can use on their end, and you can easily record the interview using in-app features or add-on screen recorders.

4.4.2 Creating Interview Questions

Based on the project’s story needs, create an informal interview guide that lists some of the key questions you want to ask. This does not need to be followed word for word but should provide a starting point for your conversations. You will then finalize this list with the Producer, who might identify questions that must be asked of every interviewee in order to meet project’s specific needs.

You can improvise additional questions in the course of the interview, based on the directions in which the discussion turns, but always keep in mind the main goal of uncovering interesting stories.

You will get the most compelling stories if you ask as few questions as possible that can be answered “yes” or “no.” Instead, focus on open-ended questions.

Some examples of the types of interview questions that can elicit these anecdotes are those that start with words like:

- Tell me about the last time you...
- What was the most exciting thing that has happened while...
- Tell me about a time when you felt [emotion]...
- Do you remember the first time you...
- Is there a particular memory that stands out related to...
- What is the biggest challenge you have faced in terms of...
- How did you decide to...

Once the interviewee shares an event that happened, you can dig deeper with questions like:

- Describe where you were when....
- What circumstances led you to....?
- What did you do when....?
- Who else was involved? What did they do?
- How did your other friends and family react?
- What did you do next?
- I would love to hear about when/how you learned about ...
- How did you react? Excited? Scared? Upset? Relieved?...
- And then what happened?
- Is there anything else you would like to add about this story?

You will not have time to ask each person every single question. Instead, perhaps ask everybody you interview a handful of the same questions – to get a broad sampling of views on the same topics – but then focus on a different subset of questions for each interviewee. Let the interviewees’ reactions guide you: when you sense that someone is getting energized talking about a topic, go into more detail about it. That way, you will end up with great stories that cover all the topics by the time you have finished all your interviews. And remember, listening intently is as important as asking questions.

4.4.3 *Tips and Tricks for Drawing Out Good Stories*

Even if your questions are excellent, sometimes the responses you get may not be very helpful. Good interviewers have ways of eliciting stories from people who may not be forthcoming with information. Some of those ideas include:

- Use eye contact and affirmation that you are listening such as nodding your head to encourage people to talk, and continue talking, in response to your question.

- Wait for at least five seconds without saying anything, and people will often talk to fill what feels like an awkward silence.
- Ask people to provide sensory information to fill in story details. What were they seeing, hearing, smelling, and so on, while the action was happening?
- Avoid asking questions about what people do in general, and ask them specifically about a particular occasion, such as the most recent time they did that thing.
- “And then what happened?” can be an important question. Once an interviewee answers a question ask, “And then what happened?” or some version of it. And even after the next answer, ask the same question again. Often, this question will generate much more detail and interest to the story.

Think carefully about *where* you’re going to do the interview. Will the person you’re interviewing tell you genuine, personal stories if you’re talking near the market and others are listening? Possibly not. It helps if you can interview people privately, depending on the questions you want to focus on – and of course depending on whether their family and community will feel OK about your meeting privately, or whether they’ll view it as inappropriate.

On the other hand, when you mainly want interviewees to tell you stories about how the weather’s been affecting the crops and the condition of the roads, or what’s happening to vegetable prices and how that affects families – impersonal, community issues like that - it can actually *help* to interview the person with other people around. You can open some of the questions to the crowd: people will chime in and remind each other about compelling incidents and anecdotes that the main interviewee might have forgotten to tell you.

Remember, you want people to tell you genuine stories that reveal how they live and what they care about. You want them to describe the beliefs, interests, events, social dramas, daily habits and practices, entertainment and other aspects of their lives, both in their families and where they work. Keep reminding them that their privacy will always be protected.

Keep asking your interviewees what *they personally* do, and observe and believe, but also ask them what they think other people in their community do and believe. Sometimes people feel more comfortable telling stories about personal or sensitive topics if they attribute those stories to “some people I know.”

4.4.4 Delivering the “Thank You” Gift

Often, Scouts will be asked to give interviewee a “Thank You” gift for sharing their stories. The gift will most often be in the form of a mobile phone credit or some other non-monetary form and will be given to you by the Producer at the beginning of the project. The gift should be given at the end of the interview.

You will collect a receipt signature (which could be verbal) from the interviewee for each disbursed gift.

4.5 Post-Interview Tasks

Some tasks should be performed at the end of each day, to review and process interviews completed while they are still fresh in your mind. Others happen at the end of your engagement as a Story Scout.

4.5.1 Daily Tasks

After each interview, listen to the audio or video recordings and refer back to your notes to identify the best stories from the interview. The criteria to use when assessing the usefulness of the stories include:

- **Specificity** – Is the story about a specific event or talking generally about things that happen?
- **Vividness** – Are there details that help to bring the story to life?
- **Emotion** – Is there an emotional hook or conflict to the story?
- **Familiarity** – Is this a situation that priority audience members will relate to?
- **Impact** – Did the event described have significance to the teller, or change their life in some way?
- **Attention** – Does the story hold your attention and make you want to know what happens next?

While you listen to the interview recordings, make note of the approximate times each story or snippet starts and ends. If you are not sure whether a particular story or part of the conversation might be useful, err on the side of keeping it and the Producers can make that call. Edit the audio or video file to highlight the best stories or key points in a single compilation file (.mp3, .wav, or .mp4 will be best), cutting out the less relevant content to make them as condensed as possible. If you do not already own editing software, this can be done using free programs available online, such as Audacity.

For each story you choose to include in the compilation file, you will create a story summary with information on the following:

- Story title (short descriptive phrase)
- Story Scout name/alias/number
- Interviewee ID#
- Date of interview
- Location
- Language of the interview
- Description of interviewee (without name or identifiers)
- “Category” of interviewee (ie, target audience, profession, etc)
- Topics/settings/audiences included in story (create a preset list of categories)
- Summary of the story, including most interesting details and story points
- Notes about potential uses for story
- Name of the audio/video file
- Timestamp of story within the audio/video file

- Other relevant information

The story summary will be a form to be completed and submitted online.

In addition, you will complete an online daily reflection form on which you will provide a summary of interviews done that day, stories collected, and recommendations for the next round of interviews. Upload the compiled daily audio/video file, the raw audio/video for each interview to the online folder on Dropbox, as specified by the Producers for them to access and review. Check in with the Producer regularly for feedback and to discuss next steps in terms of the types of people or places for additional interviews.

Keep in mind that getting a few good stories is more valuable than having a large number of interviewees – quality above quantity.

4.5.2 Project-End Tasks

As the end of Story Sourcing, you will create a Story Sourcing Write-Up. This document will provide a summary of your scouting process (including locations, dates, interviewees), your impressions and observations of the completed interviews, the major themes that emerged, and the best stories that came out of the process. You will speak with the Producer to discuss the report and debrief on the process and results.

The Write-Up will be used during the media intervention writing and production process, and the Producer may follow up with you at some point to request your insights and assistance as they work to translate those stories into the final production.

4.6 Story Sourcing Logistics

The scope of Story Sourcing is defined by Producers at the beginning of the project. You are hired to execute Story Sourcing at a particular location and over a defined number of days. You will need to plan your work accordingly to make the most of the time you are given.

The Producer/s will work with you to finalize travel and lodging arrangements, should those be needed. You will also receive per diem for each day you are asked to travel for more than a day to execute Story Sourcing.

5. CONCLUSION

Recommendations for Intervention Design and Future Studies under EatSafe

EatSafe aims to generate the evidence and knowledge on leveraging the potential for increased consumer demand for safe food to substantially improve the safety of nutritious foods in informal market settings. Central to EatSafe’s work is understanding (and potentially shaping) the motivations, attitudes, beliefs, and practices of consumers and food vendors. Outlining a detailed Story Sourcing process ensures that work done in preparation for EatSafe Story Sourcing and the subsequent media program design and scriptwriting will be done in an ethical, consistent, and replicable way across all EatSafe locations.

Recommendations for EatSafe interventions, flowing from the results of Story Sourcing, will not be available until the Story Sourcing activity is complete, which will occur in Nigeria and Ethiopia in project year two.

Story Sourcing – Local Specifications Summary Form

*(to be completed for each Story Sourcing location
by Producer/s and Assigned Scouts)*

Production Team	Names, phone numbers, emails
Project Scouting Team	Scout names, phone numbers, emails
Global Partners	
Local Partners	
Scouting Location	Name/-s of exact locations
Recommended Scout Gender	
Assigned Scout	
Scouting Dates	Range? Deadline?
Scout Travel Details	Transport to location, lodging, per diems
Interview Target Audience	Intervention Target Audience? Influencers? Extended Family?
Language/-s of Interviews	
Interviewee Identifier	Location-#
Interviewee Inclusion Criteria	
Interviewee Exclusion Criteria	

Interviewee Identification Method	Pre-Selected by Partner? Independently by Scout?
Interview questions / themes	
Interviewee Thank You Gifts	
Thank You Gifts delivery method	By Scout? Producer? Timing?
Recommended Interview method	In person, phone call, online
Conduct & Ethics Code Notes	
Safety Measures	
Cultural Considerations	

Story Summary Form

(to be completed for each story included in the Scout’s daily compilation)

Completed by Scout	
Story Title	Short descriptive phrase
Scout Name	
Date of Interview	
Location	
Interviewee ID	Location-#
Interviewee Description	Middle age woman teacher, young adult male
Interviewee Category	target audience, profession, family member, community member, etc
Interview Setting	Physical setting, body movements, nature of business
Topics Covered in the Interview	
Story Summary	
Notes about why story is selected	

Audio/Video file name	
Timestamp	Begin: End:
Scout Notes:	
Completed by Producer	
Producer Notes:	

APPENDIX II: KEBBI STATE: CULTURAL BRIEFING

DRAFT: CONFIDENTIAL

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ABSTRACT

The present document is a background cultural briefing on Kebbi State, Nigeria. It covers the realities of daily life, religion, the system of markets, food safety and the media landscape.

Keywords: Kebbi State; media; markets; social life; religion

ACRONYMS

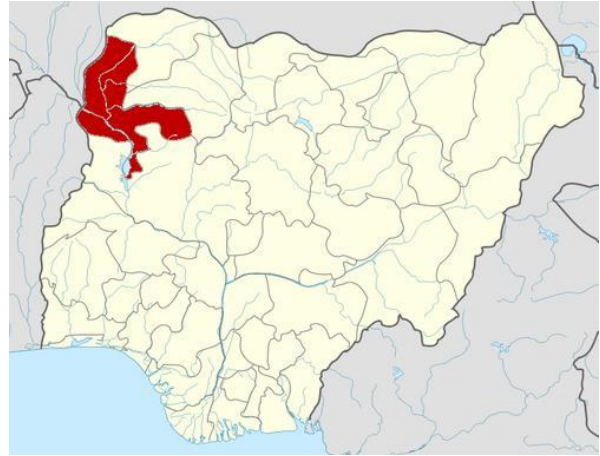
LGA Local Government area

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

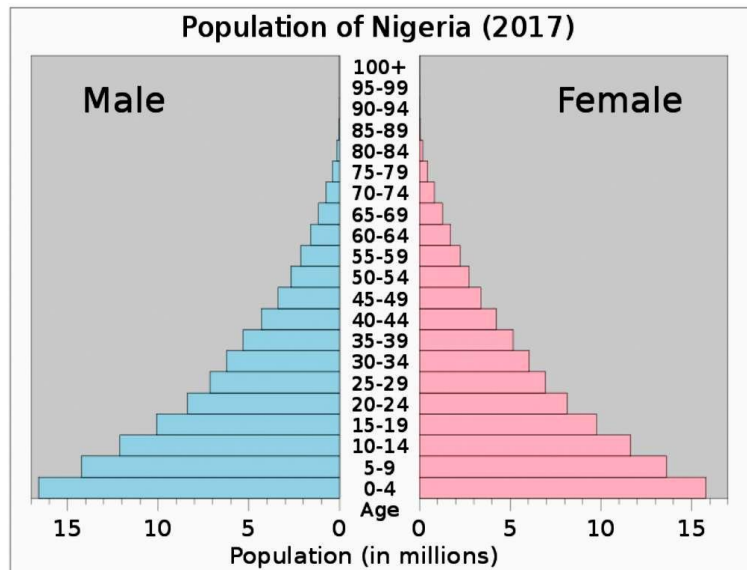
Kebbi State in north-western Nigeria (Map 1) was created out of a part of Sokoto State in 1991. The state has a total area of 36,800 km² and a total population of 3,238,628 according to the 2006 census. Population growth in Nigeria is usually estimated around 2.6% per annum, in which case, Kebbi State would be approaching 3,400,000. Figure 4 shows the characteristic age/structure pyramid for Nigeria for 2017, showing that the male/female balance is within statistical limits of confidence and that the percentage of children is very high compared with the developed world. For comparison in the United States in 2019, the corresponding percentages in the 0-4 and 5-9 cohorts were around 3%.

Map 1. Kebbi State within Nigeria

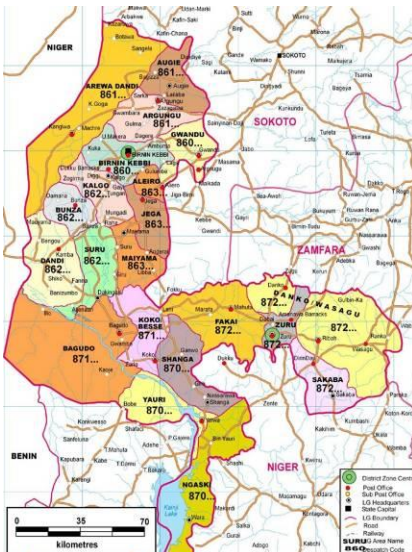


There are 21 Local Government areas (LGAs). The current Governor is Abubakar Atiku Bagudu (APC party). The capital of the State is Birnin Kebbi, which is also the headquarters of the Gwandu Emirate and which had an estimated population of 125,594 in 2007.

Figure 4. Age structure pyramid for Nigeria (2017)



Map 2. Kebbi State LGAs



1.2

Source: CC

Geography

The shape of Kebbi State is the result of past political compromises, which accounts for its unusual outline. The southern, subhumid region is generally rocky with the Niger River traversing the state from Benin Republic to Ngaski LGA. The semi-arid northern region is sandy, with the Rima River crossing from Argungu to Bagudo LGA where it joins the Niger. The vegetation is Sudanian in the north, with sparse trees and shrubs in a largely agricultural landscape.

Kebbi State, like all Northern Nigeria, has a marked rainy season, with all the annual precipitation falling between April and September. This is the season for intensive work on the farm. Communications are

very poor during this season, as most roads in Kebbi State are not sealed. The riverine and lakeshore areas have a higher rainfall (ca. 700 mm. annually) and depend largely on rainfed agriculture. The main crops are millet, sorghum, irrigated rice and maize. The rise of contra-season horticulture along the edges of rivers since the introduction of small petrol pumps in the 1980s has created a large market for vegetables such as tomatoes, onions, eggplants, potherbs and more recently carrots, cabbages and other irrigated crops. Fishing is a significant component of many livelihoods, although overfishing and the gradually reduced flow of the Niger due to climate change has reduced catches substantially in many communities.

Settled communities keep sheep, goats, donkeys and poultry, as well as cattle and camels for traction. However, the majority of livestock are kept by nomadic pastoralists, the Fulani or FulBe people, who migrate between the pastures further north and the rivers every dry season. The Fulani are the main producers of meat and dairy products reaching the markets. Relations between settled and pastoral communities have deteriorated markedly in recent years due to pressure on land and the cultivation of riverine areas in the dry season. These conflicts are occasionally extremely violent, despite the fact that both parties are Muslims. They are unconnected with broader security issues, such as jihadist raids from Niger Republic.

Photo 1. Village scene, minority area, Kebbi State



All communities fish on a small scale, but Kebbi State has several specialised fishing communities, notably the Reshe, Lopa and Laru peoples. These live on and around Lake Kainji¹, which was formerly noted for its large catches. Overfishing has reduced these, but it remains a rich resource. Smaller fish are sold fresh by the roadside or smoked and taken to the main markets. However, there are specialised entrepreneurs from southern cities who smoke the fish on the shore of the Lake and ship it by truck to urban consumers.

Photo 2. Kebbi State flooding. September 2020



Due to extensive deforestation, these river basins are subject to constant damaging floods, the most recent of which was in September 2020 (Photo 2), leading to loss of life, crops and livestock. Food prices typically rise and roads and bridges are washed away. Food security is therefore a major issue in Kebbi State.

1.3 Peoples

The state is dominated by the Hausa people, who are Muslim and who constitute the majority of the population. Nonetheless, quite a number of minority languages are spoken, as shown in Table 2;

¹ Lake Kainji is a relatively recent creation, dating from the construction of Kainji Dam in the 1970s.

Table 2. Languages spoken in non-Hausa LGAs

LGA	Languages
Argungu	Dendi; Zarma
Bagudo	Bisã; Boko; Dendi
Birnin Kebbi	Zarma
Bunza	Zarma
Donko-Wasagu	C'Lela
Dukku	us-Saare
Jega	Gibanawa
Ngaski	Lopa; Tsikimba; Tsishingini; Tsukuba; Tsuwađi
Sakaba	Cicipu; C'Lela; Damakawa (†); ut-Ma'in
Wasagu-Danko	us-Saare; Gwamhi-Wuri
Yauri	Reshe; us-Saare
Zuru	C'Lela; ut-Ma'in

Hausa remains the language of wider communication and most of the minorities listed above will speak functional market Hausa. English is spoken in the capital, Birnin Kebbi, and by most educated people, but is not common in villages. The Zuru Emirate in particular is dominated by the C'Lela people, who have their own well-developed language and culture.

1.4 Economic change in Nigeria and the requirement for new surveys

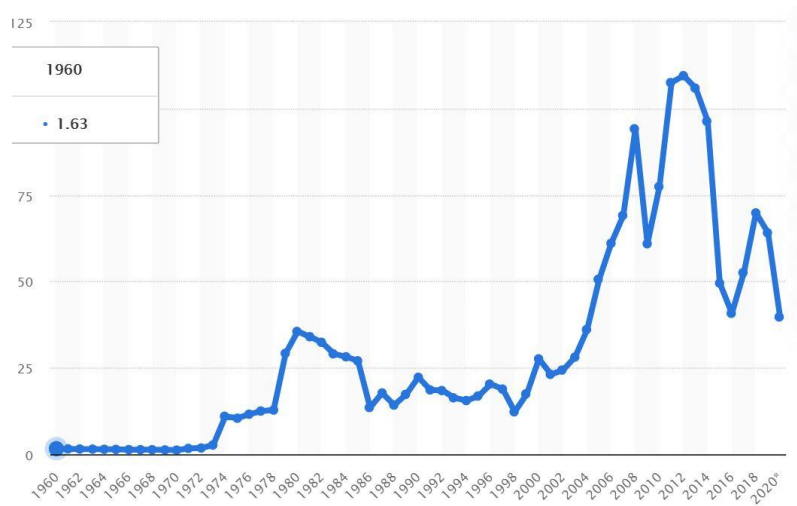
The Nigerian economy has been dependent on oil sales since the 1960s, with income from these constituting a large proportion of GDP. As a consequence, imports have made up a large proportion of deficits in the food supply. The rapid fall in oil prices since 2016 (Figure 5), has led to major declines in government budgets and thus shortfalls in both food and inputs such as fertiliser, as well as raising the cost of transport. The Naira has thus fallen in value, making all imported goods more expensive, which in turn has led to urban protests. The price of food grains is similarly rising in the semi-arid north². In principle, this could benefit local farmers, if the market infrastructure and input supply were significantly upgraded, but sluggish agricultural policy in Nigeria makes this unlikely in the short term.

The significance of this for the project in planning is that almost all published economic information will be radically out of date. It is essential that producers, consumers and traders of all categories on the ground be resurveyed to assess the consequences of these rapid changes for their production and marketing systems.

2. Social structure, power dynamics, major influences and influencers

Nigerian has a system of Federal Government not dissimilar to the United States. The top tier is the Federal Government, situated in Abuja,

Figure 5. Crude oil prices 1960-2020



² <http://saharareporters.com/2020/09/11/nigerians-groan-food-prices-rise>

in the centre of the country. Nigeria is divided into thirty-six states and the Federal Capital Territory, further sub-divided into 774 Local Government Areas. Unlike many federal systems, the other tiers of government have very little capacity to raise revenue, and thus depend heavily on budget allocations from central government.

Crosscutting the political hierarchy of the Nigerian nation state are the traditional Islamic Emirates. These grew up in the 19th century³ as a consequence of a jihad which began in Sokoto in 1804. Similar emirates are distributed all across Northern Nigeria and four are located in Kebbi State (Table 3);

Table 3. Kebbi State Emirates⁴

Emirate	Also	Main town
Kebbi	Argungu	Argungu
Gwandu		Birnin Kebbi
Yauri		Yauri
Zuru		Zuru

Until the colonial era, following the conquest of Northern Nigeria by the British in 1900, these Emirates exercised military and political power in the region. They engaged in extensive raiding of the minority peoples further south and instituted Islamic systems of justice and civil authority. The British authorities made use of them within a system of indirect rule. It suited the post-Independence rulers of Nigeria to maintain this, and they continued to be paid subsidies. However, all their formal powers have gradually been reduced. Nonetheless, they maintain a considerable amount of goodwill within the local society and are generally consulted in major crises. It is not considered good practice to proceed with projects without first consulting the local Emir. The prestige of the Emirates explains why the Hausa control much of the legislature, as well as the commercial arteries.

However, for most households, immediate authority is represented by Local Government. The LGAs manage schools, minor roads and clinics and are funded directly by the Federal Government. LGA officials are elected every few years, at intervals determined by the State Government. The most recent local government elections in Kebbi State were in July 2017. Chairmen of the Local Governments are usually hand picked party loyalists who may not represent the community. Nonetheless, the LGA is where ordinary citizens can put pressure on authority, usually through personal contact with relatives, for example to maintain roads or repair wells.

Kebbi State is poorly supplied with tertiary institutions. Kebbi State University of Science and Technology (KSUSTA) is a state-owned university in Aliero established in 2006. KSUSTA offers programmes in agriculture and sciences. Many students from the state go elsewhere in Northern Nigeria to pursue their studies.

3. Daily reality

Families typically live in extended patriarchal households, often consisting of large related kin groups in joined compounds, which in turn combine to form villages of 20-50 households. The head of such a

³ Although some claim venerable ancestry

⁴ Further historical material on these Emirates can be found in Hogben & Kirk-Greene (1966), Augi & Lawal (1999) and CAPRO (1995)

patrikin group will usually be the oldest male, unless he is incapacitated. Among the Hausa and other Muslim groups, the men do all the agricultural work and women and children are confined to the village, except for civil festivities such as marriages. Somewhat different social structures can occur among the minorities with smaller households. See, for example, the tHun (Dukkawa)⁵. In some of these minorities women also work in the fields and may go to market. There is increasing pressure on such women to conform to Islamic dress codes. In the larger towns, such as Birnin Kebbi and Argungu, there will be modern housing areas, where civil servants and other wealthy strata live. These households typically buy much of their food in urban markets rather than growing. Nonetheless, it should be emphasised these represent a very small proportion of the overall population.

Women's work consists above all in feeding the household, looking after children and livestock and processing agricultural produce, for example preparing rice for sale, smoking fish and shelling groundnuts. They often do this sitting together in informal groups. There was formerly a significant trade in handicrafts, pots, baskets etc. but this has reduced with the expansion of imported products such as enamel pots. Electricity in the remoter rural communities is still a rarity, and although grain is usually now ground in community mills, much else must still be done by hand.

Children are required to go to primary school by Nigerian law, but the reality is that many do not. Either the schools are no longer functioning, or teachers will not come to the area, due to poor pay and inaccessibility in the rainy season. In Muslim villages, the boys attend *madrassa* for several years, learning to recite Qu'ranic verses, but gaining little real education. In urban centres, there are more schools and greater incentive to attend. Female children are expected to help with household tasks from the age of five onwards and in particular to look after still younger children. Male children will go to the fields with their father, and if the household has livestock will be expected to guard these and take them for grazing.

Photo 3. Rural children in Kebbi State



Source: Author

Islam is long established among the Hausa but also other minorities such as the Dendi and Zarma. It is mainly significant for men, who attend mosque on Friday and who sometimes practise the five daily prayers. Adherence to Islam has important consequences for commerce, as most forms of credit and transaction are based on trust, which operates between Muslims. Financial transactions via smartphones are becoming more common in larger towns, but cash remains the core of the trading system. Larger villages have an established *mallam* (imam elsewhere in the Islamic world) or learned man, who also act as a *qadi*, i.e. a judge to arbitrate disputes. In the towns, the Shariya courts arbitrate civil disputes. In Northern Nigeria, the more exclusively Muslim States are increasingly trying to apply Shariya to criminal cases, which has led to disputes with the Federal Government.

⁵ Described by Prazan (1977)

Among the pastoral people, the FulBe, who supply the majority of meat and dairy products to the market, the daily rhythm is somewhat different. Few children go to school, and they are expected to assist in managing the herds from a young age. Historically, household income was based on the exchange of milk products for grain, but in recent years the demand for milk has fallen. This is the consequence of several developments; milk is no longer a prestigious gift to visitors -it has been replaced by soft drinks. At the same time, industrial dairy products, such as tinned and powered milk are freely available and can be stored. At the same time, milk yields have fallen due to poor pasture, and men have concluded it is better left for the calves, since the main source of cash is now the sale of young bulls. Boys are sent out during the day to look after the calves, sheep and goats, while women undertake milking, dairy product preparation and sales. Women used to sell milk independently, but as a more rigorous Islam has spread in this region, milk is often sold to buyers who come direct to settlements.

Apart from pastoral FulBe, there are also urban FulBe, who may not own cattle and who settle in towns and are often religious scholars and traders. Many of these have lost their language and now speak only Hausa. Nonetheless, they are proud of their ethnic identity, and hence the compound term Hausa-Fulani is often used to describe these communities.

Northern Nigeria was formerly fairly safe compared with the large urban centres in the South. However, in recent years, the security situation has changed radically. Fundamentalist Islamic insurgents, similar to those in the Northeast (Boko Haram etc.) are now active in northwest Nigeria, as in neighbouring Niger. Raids on villages, kidnapping for ransom and raids on cattle herds are now disturbingly common, and villages must take steps to protect themselves, often by setting up vigilante groups.

The police and the army are intended to be the main agents in providing security. However, these are Federal bodies and their representatives may have no connection with the local area, and even not speak Hausa. Moreover, as the recent anti-SARS (Special Anti Robbery Squad) protests show, these are not respected by local populations. Hence the rise of vigilante groups. However, the superior weaponry and resources of the insurgents inevitably means they can only respond in a limited way.

4. Business and market culture in Kebbi State

4.1 Trading

Kebbi State remains predominantly rural, with agriculture the main source of livelihood for most households. Rice is probably the main cash crop, reflecting the extensive riverine environments. Local rice is poorly processed compared with imported rice, due to lack of effective destoning and when imports were cheap, these were preferred. However, as prices have risen, local rice has become more attractive.

Especially in towns, markets are composed of a wide variety of different actors. These can be summarised as follows.

1. Professional traders originally from out of the area but who are now resident, for example selling clothes, electronics and other consumer goods
2. Local professional traders, selling bulk grains, spices and other agricultural goods as well as small manufactures. Butchers fall into this category
3. Petty traders selling small amounts of foodstuffs, particularly vegetables

4. Food sellers. Cooked food is often sold by women from out of state, for example Yoruba and Igbo⁶.
Small snacks, such as beancakes, are sold by local traders
5. Dairy products, milk, yoghurt and butter, sold by Fulani

Markets typically begin as unregulated and new ones spring up where communities are enlarged. As the sales volume increases, the community appoints a Sarkin Kasuwa, a market leader, to look after the order of the market, settle disputes etc. Sometimes local councils purpose build markets, but often these are only partly in use, as they are wrongly located. Councils try to collect fees from traders, often a source of controversy, as almost no services are provided.

Urban markets are permanent, but still have 'market days' when the great bulk of trade is conducted. Incoming traders arrive from their villages in the morning on pickup trucks, leaving in the early evening. Wealthier traders have stands but many sellers just place their goods on a mat on the ground. On these days, the road is choked with trucks, both bringing market traders and buying staples in volume.

Photo 4. Handicrafts for sale in the market



Source: Author

Livestock is usually sold at a different location from produce, to avoid problems created by animals escaping. Rural markets circulate, and professional traders follow these circuits, usually with small motorbikes.

The sale of milk and dairy products by FulBe women is the subject of some controversy. Up to the 1980s, women went unaccompanied to markets to sell their produce. Increasingly rigorous Islam has led to many communities now objecting to this practice, and in many places the women sell to mobile dealers who come to the village. Nonetheless, in some areas, women, now fully covered in Islamic dress, either sell bottles of yoghurt by the roadside, or bring yoghurt and butter to the market. This is tolerated to a greater extent in the non-Muslim minority areas.

⁶ These ethnic groups are well-known for their established trading culture

Households buy a greater proportion of their food in urban centres, where civil servants and businesspeople live who have no time to tend their own farms. In rural areas, most households are self-sufficient in food and markets as mainly for clothes and small consumer items, such as torches. Even so, they will often get sacks of staples from the rural branch of their household.

The main geographical study of markets in Kebbi State has been conducted by Hatzenbuehler et al. (2018) to try and discover if grain storage and sales could be made more effective. Map 3 shows the markets in Kebbi State they surveyed. The study concluded that standards of storage remain very poor with considerable losses to rats and insects.

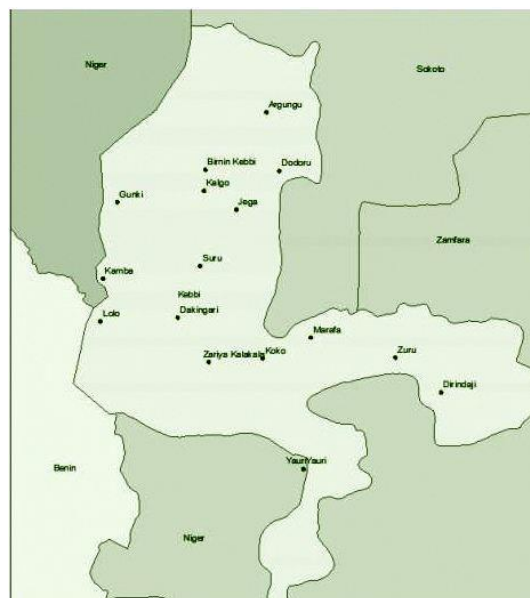
The meat trade in Nigeria is on a huge scale, given the population of southern cities and the difficulties of raising stock in ultra-high humidity environments. The nomadic pastoralists provide almost all the beef, but villagers also sell goats and sheep in livestock markets. The animals are typically brought to the market, where they are sold either for breeding or meat. The butchers, who are almost always Hausa, buy individual animals from the sellers, have them promptly slaughtered and then cut them up for sale. Although households may buy chunks of meat for meals, the great majority of the meat is sold as *suya*, a type of local kebab, which is a popular food in every market in the region.

Professional traders are usually quite high status and rich by local standards. Typically, households sell their harvest as soon as it is ready and prices are low, to the despair of NGO workers. Resentment over high grain prices at the end of the dry season is an annual ritual but is inevitable. Government sometimes interferes in the operation of the grain market, for example buying up food stocks to underpin resilience in the recent coronavirus pandemic⁷. Traders from out of state are usually already capitalised when they set up operations, whereas local grain buyers are typically from richer families or have come by wealth in another sector.

4.2 Health and safety in markets

Health and safety considerations are minimal in Nigerian markets. Open drains run everywhere and overflow regularly in the wet season. Animal faeces and blood from slaughtered animals is allowed to decompose. Insects are not prevented from landing on displayed food and dogs, cats and mice abound. No precautions are taken with handling meat and dairy products. What few studies have been undertaken on food safety in the region⁸ have found high levels of infection, such as campylobacter. Sachets of 'pure water' are commonly sold in markets, as if these were somehow safer than tap water, but studies have

Map 3. Kebbi State markets



Source: Hatzenbuehler et al. (2018)

⁷ This does not always end well. In Jos at the end of October 2020, government food reserves were looted by hungry citizens

⁸ e.g. Magaji et al. (2012), Kanya et al. (2015), Gwimi et al. (2015)

shown these contain high levels of contamination⁹. Boreholes in the state have high levels of heavy metals¹⁰.

Markets are not very safe places in other ways and market fires are common. The main market in Birnin Kebbi burnt down in 2016, with extensive loss of goods, though fortunately no lives were lost¹¹. Robbers occasionally attack markets, targeting the richer traders, in the knowledge that the police will not intervene.

5. Media

Nigeria formerly had an extremely vibrant newspaper culture, and papers in both English and Hausa were widely bought and read. *Gaskiya ta fi Kwabo*, a Hausa newspaper, was the most widely circulated in Northern Nigeria. However, as around the world, print newspapers are rapidly losing subscribers and few physical newspapers are now sold in Kebbi State. Most consumers can now be observed to read the news on their Smartphones. The most reliable newspapers covering the North of Nigeria are based in Abuja, such as *Daily Trust*, *Premium Times* and *The Punch*.

Radio in Kebbi State is confined to the State-owned Kebbi State Radio and Vision FM 92.9, a private station. Broadcasts are mixed, in both Hausa and English. Complaints on the internet confirm that coverage within the state is quite poor and many people cannot receive transmissions in remoter areas. The same is true of Kebbi State television, which is really only available in large urban centres. Official television and radio in Nigeria strongly reflect policy from the centre; the sort of more diverse media landscape typical of southern states is largely absent in the north. As consequence, state broadcasting is treated with appropriate scepticism. BBC Hausa, which addresses a wider regional audience, is generally trusted and is listened to on shortwave and internet radio.

Formal studies of the effectiveness of media in agricultural extension in Kebbi State are few and far between. Abubakar *et al.* (2009) studied the use of radio in 2008; tellingly, their data does not include the internet or Smartphones. But today, Nigerians are quite media-savvy, and the incidence of ownership of mobile phones is high. However, as maps of mobile phone coverage show¹² Kebbi State is still only covered patchily by major operators such as MTN. Hi-speed networks, such as 4G and 5G, are not present and GSM is still the major cellular network. The use of social media is common and Facebook, Instagram and Youtube are regularly accessed in towns, although there is no empirical survey data to confirm this. WhatsApp is used for messages and phone calls; apart from English, text can be in Hausa and Fulfulde.

Potentially then, social media is a key avenue for influencing farmers and traders for improved practice. However, there are no demonstrations that this actually works. The traditional agricultural extension services are typically locked into past practice and may still distribute leaflets or put-up posters. Preachers and recruiters to more fundamentalist strains of Islam are far more likely to be adept at the use of social media.

6. Conclusions

The conclusions that can be drawn from this review concerning the cultural background of Kebbi State are as follows.

⁹ Kalpana *et al.* (2011)

¹⁰ Elinge *et al.* (2011)

¹¹ <https://punchng.com/fire-guts-birnin-kebbi-central-market/>

¹² <https://www.gsma.com/coverage/#681>

- a) The economic landscape has changed rapidly in 2020, both due to falling oil prices and the coronavirus pandemic. It is of little value to undertake activities without a pre-project survey of the current situation of farmers and traders
- b) Food safety is not a current concern of market traders and there is no official mechanism to enforce higher standards. As far as traders are concerned, this simply implies higher costs without corresponding benefit
- c) Food security is, however, of great concern. Variable rainfall, rapidly climbing input prices and annual flooding are making household hunger an increasing issue
- d) Women and children play little role in making decisions about marketing, due to the Muslim household system where they stay at home. Messages by whatever medium, have to be addressed to men. This may be less so among some of the non-Muslim minorities in the south of the state
- e) Conventional methods of agricultural and health and safety extension, including printed material, radio and television, are unlikely to have much impact, due to poor signal coverage in rural areas. Social media is widely accessed, but there is no empirical evidence for its effectiveness in conveying messages of this type.
- f) In Kebbi State, Hausa is the language most widely understood, and should be used for media campaigns. However, the language of the pastoral nomads who supply meat and dairy products, is Fulfulde, and this should be used to reach this specific audience

Any campaign to improve food safety standards must be based on a realistic assessment of the situation of producers, consumers and traders.

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APPENDIX III: INTERVIEW FORM

Interview Date/s

Market name Central Market / Yaryara Market / Tsohon Kasuwa / Other: _____

GPS longitude and latitude

Interviewee name / ID (Kebbi - Scout Initials - #)

Interviewee Phone number

Gender Male / Female

Tribe

Age

Where she/he lives

Items sold

Related to another story? Yes / No

Consent forms signed? Yes / No

Interview incentive given? Yes / No

Photos taken? Yes / No

Photos consent form signed? Yes / No

Can trader easily stream videos on his/her phone? Yes / No

What is trader's **MOST PREFERRED** way of getting news and entertainment? Circle One.

TV / radio / newspaper / other people / mobile app / movies (DVD) / other _____

What other ways are used to get news and entertainment? Circle all that trader uses.

TV / radio / newspaper / other people / mobile app / movies (DVD) / other _____

Journalist Notes for a Selected Story

Select this interview for the story write up Yes / No

If yes, audio file name

If yes, Story Notes / Summary