



Lot 87, Sacré Cœur 3, Pyrotechnie x VDN
BP 45435, Dakar-Fann, Senegal
Tel: 221-869-4686
Fax: 221-824-1567
info@trustafrica.org
www.trustafrica.org

Building an Advocacy Movement for Equitable and Sustainable Agriculture in Africa

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Report on the inception convening and research methodology workshop

Introduction

This report summarizes the discussions at the inception convening for TrustAfrica's "Building an Advocacy Movement for Equitable and Sustainable Agriculture in Africa" project. The project, a component of TrustAfrica's Equitable Development program, is being implemented in six countries: Ghana, Mali, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Malawi. Participants at the convening, which was hosted by TrustAfrica, included program staff from TrustAfrica and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as well as researchers who have been recruited to conduct scoping studies in each country. The purpose of the meeting was to establish a common understanding of issues to be tackled and activities to be carried out and to agree on milestones for the project. The secondary purpose was, through a consensus-building approach, to allow researchers to interpret the terms of references for research and agree on a viable approach and structure of the research reports. The convening also provided space for the different actors to reflect on some of the broader challenges affecting development and possibilities for networking with related ongoing initiatives.

Wider Context

Currently, small-holder agriculture in Africa is characterized by:

- ✓ Inappropriate model of agricultural development that is focused on raising exports without addressing the national food requirements;
- ✓ Inadequate budgetary allocations to small-holder agriculture (average of 7% of national budget except for Malawi);

- ✓ Decreasing yields compared to the 1980s averages;
- ✓ Limited infrastructural development in small-holder areas;
- ✓ Limited networking of small-holder advocacy organizations; and
- ✓ Policy making remains a highly technical process and driven by technocrats with limited inputs from the grassroots.

Amid these negative trends of development, the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has developed the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) to promote a more unified approach to agricultural growth in Africa. In 2003 the AU Heads of State meeting in Maputo declared that agriculture, especially the small-holder sector, was critical to the development of Africa. All parties to the agreement made a commitment to "increase public investment in agriculture by a minimum of 10 percent of their national budgets" and to "improve the productivity of agriculture to attain an average annual growth rate of 6 percent, with particular attention to small-scale farmers, especially focusing on women," by the year 2015. The program aims to "help African countries reach a higher path of economic growth through agriculturally-led development, which eliminates hunger, reduces poverty and food insecurity, and enables expansion of exports."

However, despite the program's noble goals, its impact is yet to be felt and preliminary evidence shows that the intended beneficiaries—the small-holders—remain marginalized and excluded from consultations. The main goal of TrustAfrica's project and the Dakar meeting was to find practical ways of contributing to the viability and sustainability of small-holder agricultural systems through the building of requisite advocacy capacity within non-state organizations that work with and/or represent small-holder interests for prioritizing agricultural development.

Background: Preparations for the Meeting

Extensive consultations for the inception convening were held with the two foundations' respective program teams. It was agreed that the meeting would be restricted to the foundation teams and researchers. The project coordinator prepared a background paper on "The State of Small-holder Agriculture in Africa" (with particular emphasis on the six participating countries), and each researcher was asked to prepare a 15-minute presentation on the state of agriculture in the countries they were evaluating. The project's steering committee (composed of program staff from TrustAfrica and the Gates Foundation) developed the agenda for the meeting. In summary, the goals of the meeting were:

- (1) To provide a platform for the Gates Foundation to articulate its Agricultural Development advocacy goals;
- (2) To learn more from the researchers about the state of small-holder agriculture and advocacy challenges in the participating countries;
- (3) To develop a shared understanding of the kinds of organizations and grants that will help advance an African-led agricultural development agenda.

Background Activities & Immediate Results Matrix

Period	Activity	Tasks	Results
January	Scoping studies	Development and refining of TORs	Contract for researchers
		Recruitment of researchers	5 Researchers signed contracts
		Preparation of discussion document	Completed and presented at the Dakar meeting
		Preparation for methodology workshop	Draft program for workshop

Day One: Synthesis of Key Issues Raised

A representative from the Gates Foundation provided an overview of the different initiatives it is carrying out in Africa and elaborated on how the current TrustAfrica project fits in with the larger agricultural development initiatives being implemented under the auspices of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). These broader initiatives under AGRA provide an opportunity for TrustAfrica to tap into existing networks and partnerships for grant-making considerations. Furthermore, the Gates participants clarified their preference for development of the small-holder sector, an area that has been neglected in the past 25 years.

TrustAfrica provided an overview of its various programs and existing partnerships. Speakers emphasized that the '*Building an Advocacy Movement in the Agricultural Sector*' project contributes to the entrenchment of democracy through its promotion of equitable development and strengthening civil society.

Researchers from Ghana, Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania made presentations on their respective country contexts. (The researchers from Kenya and Mali were unavailable.) They described similarities in terms of the share of population depending on agrarian-based livelihoods, declining state support to small-holders, a significant gradual decline in the contribution of agriculture to GDP since the 1990s, and increasing vulnerability among rural dwellers. Furthermore, the country papers provided insights into the weak organizational capacities of unions and associations representing this category. The meeting participants further agreed on the need to track the progress being made in terms of CAAPD implementation in participating countries.

Day Two: Methodology Workshop

The second day of the convening was devoted to developing a methodology for the research and structure of the country papers. Two main research questions were developed to guide the research.

Research Question 1: Identify the factors inhibiting sustainability of small-holder agricultural systems. Critical Issues to consider include:

- ✓ Nature of existing land rights. To what extent are they secure and how do they promote equitable gender relations?

- ✓ Analysis of access to agricultural input and supply markets.
- ✓ Level of government support to small-holders in terms of the CAADP principles.
- ✓ An analysis of policies that regulate the production and marketing of agricultural goods within the small-holder sector (pay particular attention to the levels of taxation on agricultural commodities).
- ✓ State of food security.

Research Question 2- Identify the forms of agency that exist to respond to the challenges confronting small-holders. Critical Issues to consider include:

- ✓ The manner in which small-holder interests and demands are organized and mobilized at national, regional and district levels (see Analytic Matrix below).
- ✓ The relationship between NGOs and small-holder communities.
- ✓ An analysis of state and organized civil society relationships regarding agricultural policies (identify areas of engagement with the state and discuss outcomes).
- ✓ Analyze the role of existing small-holder advocacy networks in terms of their impact on agricultural policies.

Furthermore, it was agreed that the research would expand to six the four pillars identified by CAADP as crucial to agricultural development (see Annex One). The meeting also led to the refinement of an outline for the country paper.

Outputs from the Scoping Study

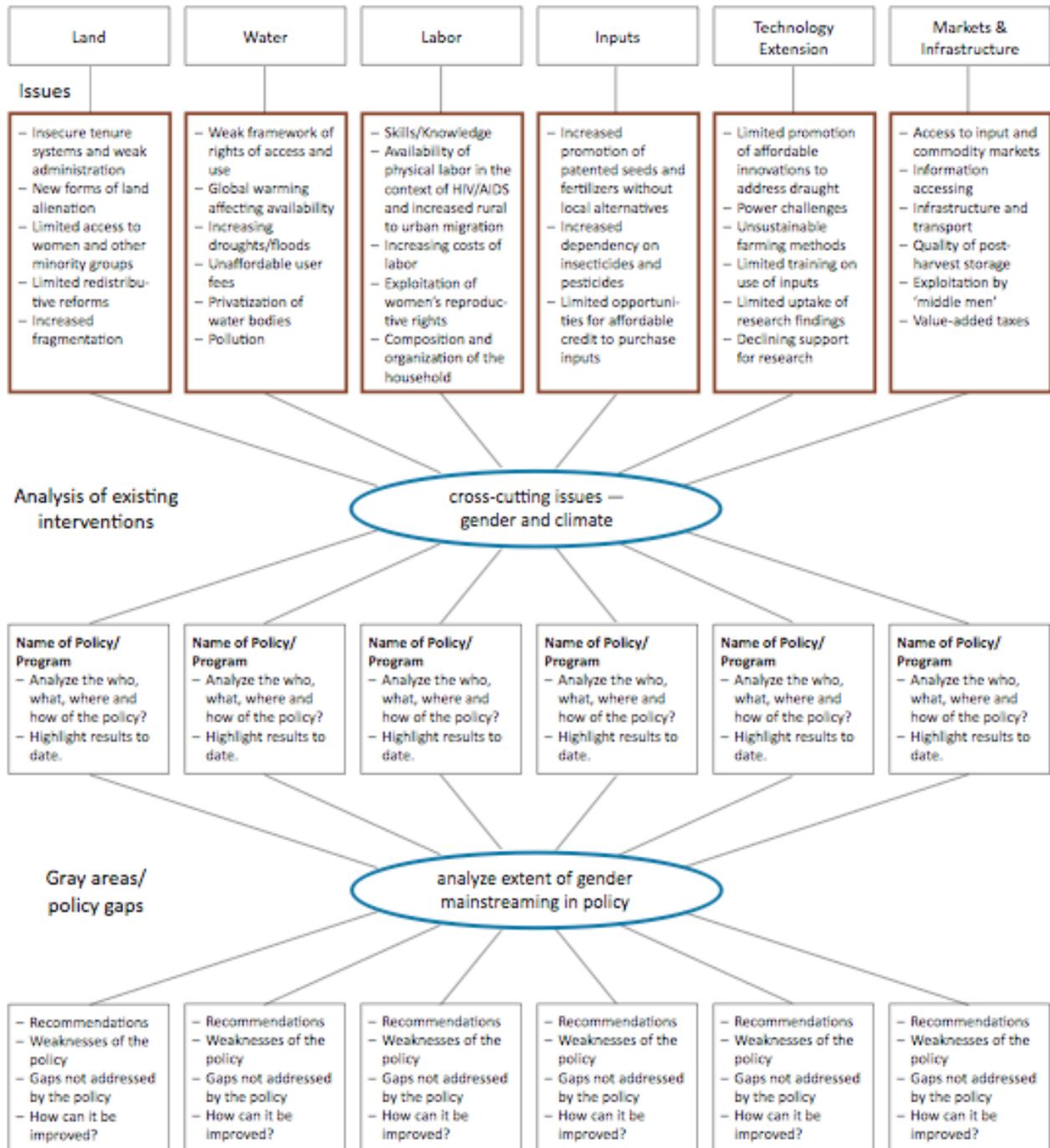
- ✓ Analytic database of national and regional organizations that can potentially partner with TrustAfrica in the project.
- ✓ An audit of internal strengths and capacity needs within the targeted organizations according to TrustAfrica Capacity Diagnosis Matrix (see below).
- ✓ Comprehensive research papers on the state of small-holder agriculture production. These papers will assess the extent to which the state has adhered to the principles of CAADP and the forms of agency that exist in trying to influence agricultural policy.

Immediate Results from the Convening

- ✓ Commitment to promoting equitable development through the promotion of small-holder development.
- ✓ Firming of relations between TrustAfrica and the Gates Foundation.
- ✓ Agreed methodology for research and outline for paper.
- ✓ Agreement on timeframes.

Annex One

Pillars of Rural Smallholder Production



Annex Two:

Program for *Methodology Workshop for Scoping Studies (Day Two of Inception Convening)*

Objectives for Workshop

- Identify the critical issues affecting small-holder agricultural production
- Discuss the various forms of agency and how they can be comprehensively analyzed
- Collectively suggest the most appropriate methods of research and frameworks of analysis

09:30–10:15 Reflections on Discussions from Previous Day

Malawi
Tanzania
Uganda
Ghana
Others

10:15–10:30 TEA BREAK

10:30–11:00 Presentation on Suggested Framework of Analysis

11:00–11:45 Plenary Discussion on Refining the Suggested Framework

11:45–12:15 The TORs and the Suggested Framework

12:15–13:00 Develop and Agree on the Outline of Research Papers

13:00–14:00 LUNCH

14:00–15:00 Logistics and Administrative Issues

Agree on time frame of submission

Signing of contracts

Tentative dates for the next convening—possibly Nairobi/Lilongwe

Any other issues

15:00 CLOSE OF MEETING