

Strengthening Country-Level Agricultural Advisory Services in the target countries of Burkina Faso, Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Uganda

Grant factsheet

Programme goals and objectives

The African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS) goal is to increase use of improved knowledge and technologies by agricultural value chain actors through efficient, effective and synergistic linkages and partnerships between Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) of member Countries to improve the delivery of these services to farmers. It operates within the framework of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the New Partnership for Agricultural Development (NEPAD) of the African Union Commission (AUC). AFAAS has a key role of enhancing the utilisation and adoption of: productivity enhancing innovations and technologies, value adding processes and loss reducing practices, largely among smallholder producers.

The project was conceptualised as part of a phased multi-donor-funded programme rooted in the AFAAS Strategic Plan which has the vision of: “Agricultural Advisory Services that effectively and efficiently contribute to sustained productivity, profitability and growth of African agriculture for poverty reduction”.

The project had two main objectives: (i) to strengthen the capacity of country level advisory service stakeholders in determining their own priorities and in improving advisory service systems. This was done through facilitating the establishment of Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) Country Fora (CF) and enhancing their capacity to manage the information and knowledge that AEAS providers need from national, regional and international sources in order to respond to farmers’ demands and developing innovative ways of interacting with them; (ii) to facilitate the availability and accessibility of appropriate and up-to-date knowledge on advisory services from a range of sources in Africa and worldwide. This was done by facilitating access and utilisation of new knowledge and insights on how to effectively develop networks of AEAS providers at national, regional and international levels.



Map of Project Area

At a glance (ID 1000004347):

Grant Implementing Agency: African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS)

Theme: Strengthening Country-Level Agricultural Advisory Services

Benefitting Countries: Burkina Faso, Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Uganda.

Total Programme Cost: USD One million United Stated Dollars (\$1M)

IFAD Contribution: USD One million United Stated Dollars (\$1M)

Co-financing (other donors): \$ 2 022 609M

Partners: European Union, partnership projects with Helvetas, FARA

Effectiveness and duration: 12 December 2012- December 2014 (2 years)

AFAAS Secretariat: Kampala, Uganda

Target group/beneficiaries

The main direct target group consisted of the AEAS providers (including farmer/producer organisations and private sector providing for AEAS) in the target countries. Enhanced capacity, access to information, partnership and networking and building the platforms acted as a ladder for providing a common voice. The IFAD country programmes were actively participating in the CF activities in Uganda precisely in the Vegetable Oil Development Program in Kalangala, Uganda. The project's direct beneficiaries were poor rural farmers and producers as well as other actors in the agricultural innovation system who benefited from getting access to knowledge through the CF members. Through the dialogues and partnership activities, policy makers, researchers and private sector benefitted indirectly by having the opportunity to engage with a multi-stakeholder platform. The training institutions were actively involved in the CFs' activities, this informed curriculum reviews. AFAAS and the Uganda Country Fora (UFAAS) continued to participate in the review of university curricula in Makerere University and other universities.

Major results

The grant fitted within IFAD's priorities as exemplified by the IFAD Strategic Framework (2011-2015), such as improving poor people's access to services and enabling the creation of institutional and policy environments to support agricultural production and non-farm activities.

The main achievements were:

- ✓ the enhanced access to services and the improvement of an enabling institutional and policy environment. In example in Uganda, the CF supported the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries to develop the extension and advisory services component the new Agriculture Sector strategic Plan, as a predecessor of the Development Strategy Investment (DSIP).The Malawi Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (MaFAAS) Secretariat has access to parliamentary leaders to discuss AEAS issues; In Sierra Leone, the SleFAAS is being integrated into the Ministry with direct access to government initiatives related to AEAS.
- ✓ In all countries, The CFs have been instrumental in the national CAADP processes especially in discussions around the Country Investment Plans. Through the establishment of the CF the project had enabled AAS providers to respond to farmers' demands and to develop innovative ways of responding to these demands.
- ✓ enhanced the capacity of country level AEAS to determine the priorities and strategies for improving delivery of demand-driven AAS through establishing and strengthening of CFs;
- ✓ catalysed dissemination and sharing of lessons learned and good practices across regions thereby establishing an AEAS knowledge management system in Africa through the development websites, Virtual Social Networking Platforms and knowledge management strategy;
- ✓ generated information on AAS innovations that can be scaled out and up across countries in Malawi, Sierra Leone and Uganda. The grant stimulated a number of partnerships, both at the national and continental level.
- ✓ AFAAS, UFAAS and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) developed joint proposal on gender responsive Farmer to Farmer Extension in three countries involving about 15 organizations per country over the 4 years with about 750 volunteer farmer trainers (VFTs). It is envisaged that Volunteer Farmer Trainers (VFTs) will train about 45,000 farmers. The totals across the three countries over the 4 year period will be about 45 organizations, 2250 VFTs and 135,000 farmers.
- ✓ In Malawi improved access to market and value chain based extension services was created through better engagement with the private sector service providers who received guidance in the MaFAAS forum.
- ✓ The training on Innovation Platforms to all UFAAS members, including IFAD project staff brought impact on capacity development AEAS actors in responding to emerging and cross cutting issues.

Knowledge generated

The following knowledge products were developed: project-specific Communication , Innovation and KM strategy, CF Websites linked to the [AFAAS website](#); Facebook account for the AFAAS Secretariat, Virtual Social Networking Platform (VSNP). Others flyers, brochures, hand books were produced and often used as exhibition materials during AFAAS , stakeholders' for and the AFAAS extension week. Available reports include: workshop and General Assembly reports by MaFAAS (Malawi), SleFAAS (Sierra Leone) and UFAAS¹. MaFAAS articles have appeared in Daily Times Newspaper, Malawi Broadcasting Corporation television and radio, Malawi News Agency website, and Zodiak Broadcasting Station website. Three newspaper articles on AEAS reforms by UFAAS were published in Ugandan newspapers.

Lessons learned

- If a short-term project has to support the establishment of the AEAS CF, it has to be implemented where a clear champion has been identified and sensitisation has been undertaken. The AFAAS Secretariat should use its core support to undertake sensitisation and identification of Champions in its member countries to prepare the ground for project support.
- The guidelines to establish CF are not a manual but rather a reference to assist the users to identify the starting point and vary the emphasis on each step depending on the situation on the ground. The country fora provided the neutral platform to conduct assessment with the sole objective of enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of AEAS, although further support is needed to sustain such intense process.
- The country forum can facilitate the mobilization of resources to strengthen and diversify the AEAS in farming communities in particular the knowledge on new challenges in agriculture productivity and concepts on AEAS innovations. The CF has to be established fully before they can identify the areas where they can support IFAD Country programmes. A dedicated process of strengthening if not improving the understanding and capacities of AEAS actors to innovations is vital if change is to be achieved in AEAS across the country. Such capacity strengthening support is required both for decision makers as well as field agents.
- AEAS innovation support and knowledge management have to be managed separately and the critical link created gradually. Both aspects greatly depend on the presence of dedicated facilitators with different competencies. Dedicated support to improve the capacities of AEAS actors in the use of ICT-based virtual social network as well as continuous improvement of the systems to adapt to the requirements of the users.
- There is need for better reporting of outcomes and impact emerging at the ground in order to make the linkage between strengthening AEAS providers and better livelihoods for poor farmers more explicit. A strategy to better map the impact of the CFs on smallholder farmers' lives was going to be put in place from July 2015.

Way forward

The project supported the establishment and strengthening of the Country Fora. The concept of the CF is key to AFAAS and its constituency and the CF model/ concept has already been adapted, and replicated, which shows the demand to scale up and out. Furthermore, the project supported the implementation of the activities and hence contributed to delivering the AFAAS Strategy outputs by supporting the stocktaking of innovative AEAS approaches and developing a systematic process and tools for the identification of AEAS areas that need innovation. The tools developed, the experiences gained and the lessons learnt in supporting innovation, provide a foundation for AFAAS to develop and institutionalize formal guidelines to support AEAS innovation activities. An initial inventory of the AEAS approaches in all the supported countries except Mozambique² is now

¹ All documents can be found at www.afaas-africa.org

² Due to the lack of a champion to spearhead the process

in place. It is expected that as the CF becomes more established, more approaches and methods will be identified and the inventory expanded. The Malawi Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (MaFAAS), the Sierra Leone Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (SleFAAS) and the Uganda Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (UFAAS) evaluated the identified AEAS approaches. MaFAAS and UFAAS produced a synthesis paper of the identified and evaluated approaches these need to be operationalised. These papers give a comprehensive assessment of how well the approaches are aligned with the assessment criteria. They give MaFAAS and UFAAS a good starting point for identifying areas for innovation for specific approaches or generically among all the approaches.

Grant linkages to IFAD investment project

The grant has been designed to benefit all IFAD projects in the target countries. The linkage has been particularly fruitful in Uganda, where the IFAD country office has provided an important contribution towards a lobby and advocacy platform for rectifying the situation of the extension services and bringing the development of demand driven pluralistic services back on track. It also provides a platform for technically advising the IFAD programmes in Uganda on alternative actions/measures to provide AAS to farmers.

Links to grant documentation

- Grant Design Document: [https://rms.ifad.org/OfficialRecords/OP2/AFAAS/001395/\[0000199025\]%20Grant%201395.eml](https://rms.ifad.org/OfficialRecords/OP2/AFAAS/001395/[0000199025]%20Grant%201395.eml)
- President Report: <https://webapps.ifad.org/members/lapse-of-time/docs/english/EB-2012-LOT-G-5.pdf>
- Project Completion Report: [https://rms.ifad.org/OfficialRecords/OP2/AFAAS/001395/\[0000222863\]%20FW%20AFAAS_%20.eml](https://rms.ifad.org/OfficialRecords/OP2/AFAAS/001395/[0000222863]%20FW%20AFAAS_%20.eml)
- Project website: www.afaas-africa.org

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