



Community of Practice on Seed Security Assessments for the Horn of Africa **Summary of the Third Online Discussion** *6-27 February 2015*

Moderator: Joseph Okidi

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Opening of the 3rd Discussion of the SSA CoP: I send my sincere gratitude and greetings to all who managed to get to the New Year -2015. It has been a while without any discussion in our community of practice on seed security issues around the horn of Africa (HoA). I know end (2014) and beginning of 2015 had their tolls on our workload, but I believe we all got through well.

1.0 Seed Security Assessment updates

- *Kenya:* Towards the end of last year, FAO Kenya in collaboration with County Government (Agricultural Department) conducted a seed security assessment in the South Eastern Livelihood zone. Key findings are as summarized in the attached document. Any comment on the findings and recommendation is welcome.
- *Uganda:* A seed security assessment will be conducted in West Nile by the Integrated Seed Sector Development (ISSD) Programme with technical support from FAO. This assessment will be conducted from 9th to 18th March 2014.

Please let us know if you are planning any seed security assessment in your country/region, and do not hesitate to contact us for any technical support. Wishing you all a happy New Year!! (Joseph Okidi, FAO Moderator)

Need for SSA in South Sudan: Thank you for sending the seed security Assessment update of Kenya, Malawi, and Uganda. There is great need to carry such assessment in South Sudan areas like the Greater Equatoria livelihood zone and other parts of neighboring Countries (Hellen, ACEM).

Somalia SSSA update: Thanks a lot for keeping us posted on the activities that are taking place around the SSSA CoP; Let me also take this opportunity to inform to the CoP members that the SSSA exercise is also going on in Somalia. The field data collection in Puntland and Somaliland has been completed and we will be sending missions to collect data to South Central area very soon. Hopefully in the next few months we will be able to share this valuable and useful information with all of you (Laura Cortada, FAO Somalia). Many thanks for sharing with us the update from FAO Somalia. We hope to get your wide experience shared with the CoP (Joseph Okidi, FAO Kenya).

Kenya SSA confirmed Ministry of Agriculture Visit: Thanks so much for the update on CoP activity on SSSA in Kenya. The information is very informative and in most areas confirmed observations made in our visits to the field (Mary Karanja, Ministry of Agriculture - Kenya).

Appreciations: Thanks so much for the update on CoP activity on SSSA in Kenya, Malawi and Uganda. The information is very important and we will be able to share this valuable and useful information with others (Abdullahi Idow, WOCCA Somalia; Yakub Ali Hassan COSDA Somalia)

SSA Needed for Eastern Equatoria, South Sudan: Thanks for your updates on SSA across Africa especially Kenya and Uganda whom South Sudan shares common international borders. Farming communities in South Sudanese may be very interested to know more of the seeds cultivated in those areas. As for the coming cropping season in year 2015, farmers will expect improvement compared to year 2014 where most farmers complained of heavy rainfall and landslides washed most crop farm in Eastern Equatoria State of South Sudan particularly in Ikwoto County bordering Uganda, and in Kapoeta and Budi County bordering both Kenya. They complained both drought and heavy rains. Seed security assessment is deemed for those areas though other places are also affected in South Sudan (Mokorondere Joseph, ICRC, and South Sudan)

CRS SSA Planned Training for Jonglei State- South Sudan: Thank you for this informative report and the colleagues for these scientific inputs and analysis of the seed system. On behalf of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) South Sudan and especially the Jonglei Food Security Program (JFSP) I would like to notify the CoP members that a USAID founded program on Food Security in Jonglei state, being implemented by CRS, plans to conduct the State-Level Seed Security Assessment (SSA) Training. This training will target and be attended by the local indigenous farmers, Agriculture extension staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, CRS as well as partner staff. We felt that by cascading the knowledge of SSA through this training will be a fundamental strategy for the participants to have an inception and better insight into **what is Seed Security and Assessment?**. The training documents are already in place and we will notify if there are additional technical supportive gaps required (Alier Arem Deng, CRS Jonglei State, South Sudan).

Q&A on CRS SSA training plan: Thank to CRS for sharing with us the information about SSA training plan. Could you provide us with tentative dates for this training? Are you foreseeing actual assessment being conducted immediately after the training (Joseph Okidi, FAO Kenya)? Thanks, we are yet to pick up the date after necessary arrangements, actual field work assessment will be done once the training is finalized (Arem, CRS).

SSA Need for Lakes State, South Sudan: Warm greeting from Rumbek south Sudan, what is the plan for Lakes State on the seeds security, ACROSS is organizing seeds recollection with FAO South Sudan for redistribution. Is there any training plan like last year? (James Madit, ACROSS). Request forwards to FAO South Sudan office (Joseph Okidi, FAO Kenya).

2.0 Kenya SSA Results and Recommendations

Critical question: One of the main recommendations of the Kenya SSA is that Government (THVCs program), FAO and NGOs should limit or completely stop Direct Seed Distribution (DSD) in the South Eastern Livelihood Zone of Kenya. Do you agree with this recommendation, why? (Joseph Okidi, Moderator)

Need to Continue with SSA: I wish to express my contribution to the SSA in the horn of Africa. At the moment from the lessons learnt in the Kenya Seed Security Assessment. There is need for organizations to continue carrying out this kind of SSA and share the findings with both the county and National Governing for purpose of planning and supporting the farmers. My recommendation is do research, model and advice the duty bearer and other stakeholders on the way forward. Giving out seed is not the best option for sustainability. A case of South Sudan that is in dire need of food needs the intervention of seed for the communities to be food secure (Simon Wankuru, Action Aid International).

Let's help farmers multiply their own seed: Before we completely cut the distribution of seed to farmers, a thorough assessment has to be carried out to establish the resilience of those farmers towards seed security. If they are not resilient, bulking sites should be encouraged so that farmers produce their own seed which is more sustainable. We have practiced these with a number of groups we are working with and it has proved to be working quite well. Let's help farmers multiply their own seed (Anthony Khisah, Farming Systems Kenya – Nakuru).

DSD is expensive, sometimes provided late and doesn't consider farmers preferences: We need to confirm that seed distribution is not entirely discouraged in this conversation, rather direct seed distribution. From my experience, direct seed distribution (DSD) is expensive in terms of logistics involved including transportation, offloading and loading, personnel involved in distribution, among others. DSD is also tedious due to protracted procurement process and long chain involved in the delivery. As a result, in most cases the seeds are received by beneficiaries late. It is also prone to corruption and misuse especially where it is handled by dishonest personnel along the chain. DSD does not take into account farmers (Beneficiaries) seed preferences and ends up with a lot of wastages due to unplanted seeds (Daniel Mwanga, FAO Kenya).

Promote Voucher and Fairs where input (seed) markets are functional: To the contrary, other forms of seeds interventions have been tried with great success. I have in mind seed voucher and fairs system which FAO and Catholic relief services have used with great success. The system could also incorporate other farm inputs which are crucial during planting and weeding period. Under the system, only vulnerable farmers are issued with vouchers and inputs/seed fairs organized during which both registered agro-input dealers, local seed bulkers (Known seed producers) and known local based grain seed traders are involved. Before transaction take place, farmers are well prepared with extension advisory services on seed quality and adaptability and crop husbandry practices, among others
Seed vouchers & fairs has the following advantages, among others

- (a) Does not interfere with the local seed system, rather it promotes it and hence diversity and resilience. The farmers are able to buy seeds of their choice.
- (b) Promotes local entrepreneurship and economy, including local stockists, grain seed traders and local seed bulkers and innovators.
- (c) Minimizes costs related to transport and procurement logistics as the agro-input dealers, grain seed traders and seed bulkers bring their wares to the farmers
- (d) Timely seed distribution is achieved for as organizing the fair is less tedious.

It is however, important to note that seed vouchers and fairs may be hindered where local seed system has been disrupted by an acute and severe disaster and agro-input dealers are non- functional. In this context, direct seed distribution may be contemplated alongside building the capacity of local seed supply system through seed bulking and banking (Daniel Mwanga, FAO Kenya).

No justification for continuous seed distribution in Kenya: Thank you for sharing the findings of the assessment. Unfortunately, I was not able to participate due to other engagements. The summary is quite detailed. I hope to participate in one of the assessment soon. On the recommendation "there is no justification for continuous seed distribution being undertaken by the government and development partner". This will require implementation of the way forward (which is very good) provided and again which requires a lot of technical advocacy to ensure smooth transition. How do we ensure Seed security assessment is funded by County Governments or National Government to inform food security interventions? (Simon Mbuki, World Vision Kenya).

Seed access is the major concern and not availability in the ASAL-Kenya: DSD in most cases should apply to a situation where there is no seed (unavailability) within close proximity to the farming households in time for planting. From the SSA findings it was crystal clear that the problem is not unavailability of seed within the area but rather access problem. From the farmers, the message is very clear; major reasons are high seed prices (31.8%), low income (25%) and crop failure (Fig. 1). Although crop failure due to unpredictable rainfall (Drought) is sited one of the reasons for being seed insecure, it denotes possible unavailability of own saved seed. Analysis of poor harvest however shows that there is even high possibility of getting seed from the poor harvest of 2013 OND season. What we need to think of collectively is putting in place a mechanism that help famers saved seed immediately after harvest (Joseph Okidi, FAO Kenya). I totally agree with your observation & complement (Daniel Mwanga, FAO Kenya).

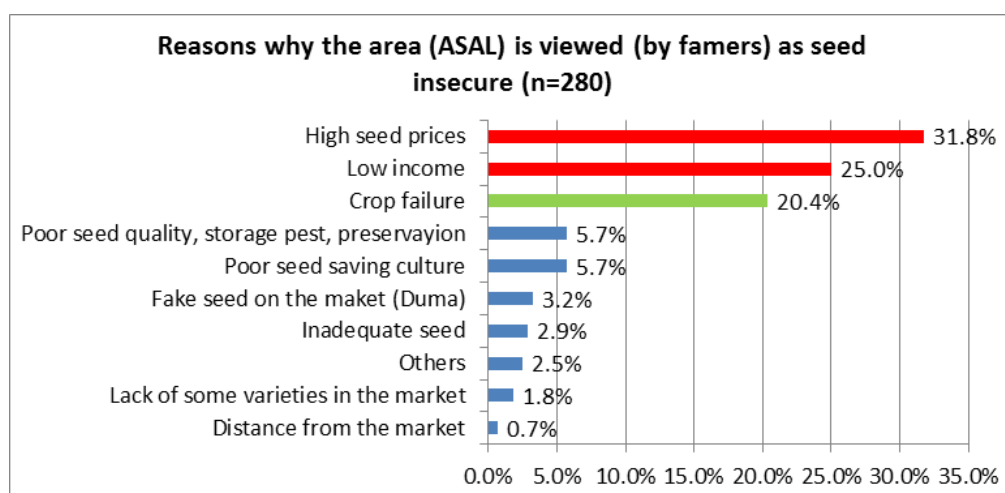


Fig. 1. Reasons why famers in ASAL-Kenya feel they are seed insecure.

DSD inevitable in conflict situation but with caution: I think direct seed distribution is inevitable but the system can be minimized by encouraging farmers to save their own seeds. In conflict situations, farmers' seed saving systems can be disorganized and they may need to be supported with DSD. Secondly, when introducing new cultivars you would need to be the same. But all these have to be preceded with assessments so that farmers' interests are taken into account. Many organizations rush to procurement of seeds without doing assessments and these results to introduction of alien seeds that are either rejected by the farmers in preference to the common ones or not planted especially when blanket seed distribution is done where trainings may not be provided due to large size of the beneficiaries (Stephen Mawadri, South Sudan).

Need to do post conflict SSA: I agree with you that in a conflict situation, such as what we are seeing in South Sudan, not only the farmer's seed saving system get disorganized but also the markets become dysfunctional in most cases. Under such circumstances, DSD may become inevitable. However, before we dive in for DSD a thorough seed security assessment needs to be conducted to understand the situation (Joseph Okidi, FAO Kenya).

Introducing new variety through DSD may be harmful: I would want to disagree with the approach of using DSD as an avenue for introducing new variety may not be appropriate in term of adaptability and also being accountable to the affected population. We need to take into consideration their preference as we plan for DSD (Joseph Okidi, FAO Kenya). I agree with Joseph, that DSD is not the right way to introduce new varieties they don't know. However if the SSA indicate that farmer are having problem with their varieties i.e. disease, growth cycle is too long etc. and there are new varieties available to address the problem, it could be the opportunity to do some variety demonstration so farmers could see them. We would call this Participatory Varietal Selection (PVS). Based on the results of the demos there may be scope for spreading the new varieties more widely (Thomas Osborn, FAO).

The argument by both Joseph and Thomas are quite valid and to the point. Varietal development, certification and recommendations in most countries especially developing countries like Kenya are for the wide geographical areas due to economies of scale. Differences among recommended geographical areas for specific variety production in term of varietal adaptability are common. Similarly, farmers' preferences are not taken on board in DSD in most cases. Wide scale distribution of seeds through DSD can be very disastrous to the food security that they are intended to address. I know of various circumstances, since 1996, in which distributed seeds were not planted at all due to preferences and, if planted, in some cases, the adaptability concerns were observed in some pockets, thus wasting farmer's resources and escalating food insecurity. There are even some observed varietal adaptability concerns under seed bulking programme we were doing under a certain development partner in Eastern Kenya where research organization persuaded us to push new varieties to seed bulkers (Daniel Mwanga, FAO Kenya).

Need to introduce varieties through participatory approaches: The best way to introduce new varieties would be as indicated by Thomas- small *participatory* demonstration plots with the farmers so that they are able to make informed decision. Farmers varieties should be incorporated in such demonstrations (Daniel Mwanga, FAO Kenya). Similarly, in Northern Bahr el Ghazal state of South Sudan and other parts of the country, significant proportion of farming households are depending only on one or two crops. Over the years, humanitarian actors have exerted significant effort towards crop/variety diversification through DSD with only marginal success. In response, FAO has tested and adopted with relative success the Farmers' Field School extension approach as a platform for introducing new crops/crop variety to farmers. The success of the FFS approach could be attributed to the high level of AAP demonstrated. Overall direct seed distribution compromises accountability to the affected population (Joseph Lita, FAO South Sudan)



Fig. 2. Participatory FFS- South Sudan

I strongly agree with Joseph *et al* that DSD is not a better option for introduction of a new variety in a farming system. I up-voted Participatory Varietal Selection (PVS) Tom echoed as the best option since it enhances accountability. However in emergency or severe food and seed insecurity situations, I would opt for DSD as PVS may not provide immediate solutions since it takes some time. I would do this when I have secondary knowledge of the farming system of the targeted agro-ecological zone and also varietal attributes of the NEW variety. I think PVS may work well in stable and fairly organized seed systems, functional markets and relatively food secure environments. PVS is done not because we are totally unaware of the outcome of the demo plots but because we want to be accountable to the farmers (Stephen Mawadri, South Sudan)

Need to build stronger farmer system: Farmers' seed saving system is very sustainable if we can build strong farmers institutions. I know some seeds are difficult for farmers to save for instance onions and cabbages but other vegetable seeds, pulses, cereals and grains can be saved. I have seen many farmers suffer in hands of unscrupulous seed dealers who supply fake seeds which are not viable, impure and wrong varieties (labeling is different with what is actually inside the sack) and this is common with sorghum seeds. I also prefer to buy unshelled groundnuts from farmers than to buy shelled ones from seed companies because the later loses viability faster than the other (Stephen Mawadri, South Sudan).

FAO Seed Experience with Post-Election Violence in Kenya: Conflict that lead to displacement and disruption of farmer's seed systems may not necessary lead to DSD, if local and formal seed system is functional. During post-election violence in Kenya in 2007/2008 thousands of farmers were displaced. During recovery period, FAO partnered with WFP and Government of Kenya in provision of immediate food support (WFP) and seeds (FAO). The seeds were not distributed through DSD, but through seed vouchers and fairs. The private agro-input dealers and seed companies were involved in seed fairs with great success. The farmers were able to get seeds of their choice, while at the same building the capacity of input stockists who had also been affected. It is important to look at the impact of the conflict on the whole seed systems before making a decision on the mode of distribution (Daniel Mwanga, FAO Kenya)

Proper SSA needed in post conflict situation: Thanks for bringing up post conflict situation in Kenya in relation to seed intervention. I partly agree with you, however, note that the input (seed) trade fairs/vouchers works well when the market in post conflict is functional. I believe in countries such as

South Sudan, with almost no functional formal sector, in some locations conflicts disable the functionality of the market. In such cases, careful decision need to be made and this could only be done when a proper seed security assessment is done (Joseph Okidi, FAO Kenya).

Need Assessment? Needs assessment is a systematic process for determining and addressing needs, or "gaps" between current conditions and desired conditions or "wants". The discrepancy between the current condition and wanted condition must be measured to appropriately identify the need. The need can be a desire to improve current performance or to correct a deficiency. A needs assessment is an important part of the planning process, often used for improvement in individuals, education/training, organizations, or communities. It can refine and improve a product such as training or service a client receives. It can be an effective tool to clarify problems and identify appropriate interventions or solutions. By clearly identifying the problem finite resources can be directed towards developing and implementing a feasible and applicable solution. Gathering appropriate and sufficient data informs the process of developing an effective product that will address the group's needs and wants. Internal local markets, which routinely provide farmers with both food and seed had been officially banned. In some zones farmers were reported as abandoning farming all together or harvesting little due to poor farm management linked to Ebola stress (Abdirahman Ismail, SHADO Somalia).

3.0 Seed policy in Africa

Proposed changes to seed policy: they are being over-simplified, unworkable solutions that will ultimately fail – though an elite group of farmers may enjoy some small short term benefits. As to seeds, all of the participating states agreed to adopt plant variety protection laws and rules for marketing seeds that better support the private sector. Despite the fact that more than 80% of all seed in Africa is still produced and disseminated through 'informal' seed systems (on-farm seed saving and unregulated distribution between farmers), there is no recognition in the New Alliance programme of the importance of farmer-based systems of saving, sharing, exchanging and selling seeds. African governments are being co-opted into reviewing their seed trade laws and supporting the implementation of Plant Variety Protection (PVP) laws. The strategy is to first harmonize seed trade laws such as border control measures, phytosanitary control, variety release systems and certification standards at the regional level, and then move on to harmonizing PVP laws. The effect is to create larger unified seed markets, in which the types of seeds on offer are restricted to commercially protected varieties. The age old rights of farmers to replant saved seed are curtailed and the marketing of traditional varieties of seed is strictly prohibited (Abdirahman Ismail, SHADO Somalia). Concerns have been raised about how this agenda privatizes seeds, and the potential impacts of this could have on small-scale farmers. Farmers will lose control of seeds regulated by a commercial system. There are also serious concerns about the loss of biodiversity resulting from a focus on commercial varieties (Abdirahman Ismail, SHADO Somalia).

SHADO Somalia Food Security Organization seeds policy" there is various types of legal and policy initiatives that directly affect what kind of seeds small scale farmers can use. We focus on two: Intellectual property laws, which grant state-sanctioned monopolies to plant breeders (at the expense of farmers' rights), and seed marketing laws, which regulate trade in seeds (often making it illegal to exchange or market farmers' seeds) (Abdirahman Ismail, SHADO Somalia).

Information on PVP laws: Thanks for posting this interesting write up on the proposed changes to seed policy. I am interested to know who is behind this proposed seed policy changes in Africa. What I know about plant Variety Protection (PVP) laws is basically to protect the rights of plant breeders within the

formal seed sector and I don't think it has significant impact on the informal seed sector (Joseph Okidi, FAO Kenya).

Need to protect local land races: We might need to advocate for the protection of indigenous varieties. Sometimes it is the forces of demand and supply that add or remove a variety from circulation. Germplasm collection and preservation should be one of our national, regional and international responsibilities and strategies to protect the local land races (Joseph Okidi, FAO Kenya).

National seed policy development and the IPR for PVP: National seed policy should be developed with the entire seed sector stakeholder the government, private sector and farmers so there is a shared vision of the seed sector both formal and informal. These are national policy and national decisions. As Joseph says, PVP is to provide Intellectual Property Right (IPR) protection to those that spend the time and money to develop new varieties. IPR protection is not so much against farmer saving and trading but against other seed companies taking (stealing) the new variety and eventually selling it on the market. An example is Kenya that has PVP in compliance with UPOV, and a vibrant a seed industry but there are still plenty of improved varieties being traded in the local market as is evident in the recent Kenya SSA. PVP, depending on how it is written in the country, has provisions for farmers to save and plant seed from the harvest for the next season. PVP does not affect traditional varieties but only registered varieties with PVP protection. Quite frankly because of the ease of farmer seed saving of self-pollinated varieties most seed companies focus on hybrids and vegetable seed for which seed saving is more problematic. They know when they produce self-pollinated varieties that farmers will not purchase it so often unlike hybrids that must be purchased every year (Thomas Osborn, FAO).

4.0 Seed Security Concept and Indicators

Sharing of discussion paper: As part of an ECHO funded project FAO has produced a discussion paper entitled “Household Seed Security Concepts and Indicators”. This 9 page paper introduces an expanded and revised Seed Security Conceptual Framework (SSCF) together with a set of suggested indicators to measure changes in seed security parameters. In the revised SSCF, there are five pillars of household seed security:

- a) Seed availability;
- b) Seed access;
- c) Varietal preference and suitability;
- d) Seed quality;
- e) Resilience of the seed system.

The paper lays out the conceptual groundwork for development of enhanced Seed Security Assessment (SSA) training materials, data collection tools and analysis. It is one of a family of SSA related products currently being finalised by the FAO SSA development team.

Please feel free to ask, comment or suggest improvement to the concept and indications. The technical team accepts constructive criticism as well (Joseph Okidi, Moderator).

Comments: Thank you for the initiative, it is brilliant. Will study the discussion paper and revert with my views and comments if any (Triza Karanja, Ministry of Agriculture – Kenya; Joseph Lita, FAO South Sudan).