



Minutes

Africa RISING East and Southern Africa Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting

4th September 2013, Sunbird Hotel, Lilongwe, Malawi

The meeting started at 10.00am and ended at 2.55pm.

Present

Victor Manyong, (Chair) IITA Director for Eastern Africa

Jerry Glover, Sustainable Intensification Senior Advisor, USAID

Ivan Rwomushana, ASARECA

Bekunda Mateete, Chief Scientist, Africa RISING

Catherine Njuguna, Communications Officer Africa RISING (assisting in taking notes)

Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon, Africa RISING Project Coordinator (Committee Secretary)

Beliyou Haile (Africa RISING Program M&E)

Apologies

Hassan Mshinda, Director General, COSTECH

Agenda

1. Welcoming PSC members (V. Manyong)
2. Follow up on action points from last meeting (V. Manyong)
3. Management and implementation issues encountered since last PSC meeting Committee members (I. Hoeschle-Zeledon & M. Bekunda)
4. Reflection on stakeholders meeting of previous day (J. Glover)
5. M&E and project mapping tool update (B. Haile)
6. Communications update (C. Njuguna)
7. Staff update, briefing on WA Steering Committee meeting and PCT meeting (I. Hoeschle-Zeledon)
8. Next activities and upcoming events (I. Hoeschle-Zeledon)
9. AOB
 - Update on ASARECA General Assembly in Burundi
 - Sustainability and funding

1 Welcoming PSC members (Manyong)

Manyong started off the meeting by welcoming all the PSC members and especially those attending the meeting for the first time, Haile from IFPRI and Rwomushana from ASARECA. He also conveyed the apologies of Mshinda, the Director General of COSTECH, noting that this was the second time he had been absent and the PSC needed to discuss this.

Giving feedback to project management: Manyong said the PSC has been receiving requests to provide input in the project including proposals, budgets and different M&E documents and it was

important for the PSC members to respond to these e-mails and give their inputs whenever requested by the project management. That's how the PSC contributes to the implementation of this project. Changes in membership: Manyong noted that AfricaRice had pulled out of the project and therefore left the annually rotating CGIAR seat on the PSC vacant. He was happy to welcome ASARECA on board of the PSC noting its role as a regional organization was critical to the project. He was pleased to note that the M&E team was now in place with Azzarri, Charles, and Haile replacing Sakana and Wood.

Comment: It was noted that most of the members of the PSC were also involved in the implementation of the project and there was therefore a need to receive inputs from external/independent sources, for example through the suggested science advisory committee which was an agenda item for this meeting.

2 Action from previous minutes

a) *To put M&E team in place:* Hoeschle-Zeledon informed the PSC that 3 regional M&E specialists had been recruited by IFPRI, covering Ethiopia, West, and East/Southern Africa. The ESA regional M&E officer, Ainsley Charles, is based in Arusha and supported by Haile who is the global M&E Coordinator under the leadership of Azzarri. The team was expected to hold meetings every year – they had held an M&E meeting last year in August and the next is scheduled for November this year.

Charles' status: Glover pointed out that Charles' contract was ending in September. He wondered when the contract would be extended as clarity and continuity in the region were needed to avoid negative impact on project implementation. He wondered whether IFPRI had any specific reason for not giving him a longer contract. Belyou said one of the reasons was related to funding but she would follow up with IFPRI and let the PSC know. Glover also said if there was anything he could do on his part to assure IFPRI of longer term funding, he was willing to provide that.

b) *Communications team:* The communication of the project was proceeding well though the project communication strategy had not been finalized. The project was receiving support from Jeffrey Oliver based in Zambia and Catherine Njuguna, based in Tanzania. The project is in the process of recruiting a Research Communications Specialist to cover ESA and WA. The ESA and WA project Communication Team will meet physically at the annual learning event later in the month but held a lot of internal consultations and linked up with the Program Communications Team at ILRI.

c) *Change of committee's name:* Hoeschle-Zeledon informed the PSC that the change of name from project coordinating committee to project steering committee (PSC) and its broadened role had been accepted by the other project coordination teams and the Program Coordination Team (PCT).

d) *Keeping communications with the various groups:* The PSC was informed that thanks to the efforts of keeping in contact with the USAID country missions, the management and scientists had been invited to various USAID mission events. A MoU had been signed with the USAID Tanzania mission funded NAFKA project but was still on paper. A MoU had also been signed with INVC, a Malawi mission funded nutrition/value chain project and implementation is going well. Collaboration with iAGRI through attachment of students to Africa RISING is taking off. The communication with other groups will be kept open.

e) *Formation of a USAID mission led working group in Tanzania:* The question of whether to form a formalized group was revisited. It was felt a handling a formal working group would be overwhelming for the Tanzania mission. PSC members agreed to continue identifying opportunities as they come and push the NAFKA partnership to move it beyond paper.

f) *Country representative/spokesperson:* Do we need a formal country rep in each country? It was agreed this was not necessary at this time and to keep the current structure which was working well - Regis Chikowo overseeing Malawi, M. Bekunda Tanzania. In the future, a NARS representative in Malawi would be helpful. The profile of the person has to be defined.

g) *Branding*: The PSC agreed on the suggestions to strengthen the visibility of the project through proper branding. The branding on the PowerPoint presentations was commendable but there was need to extend it to the overall project especially at the field level where the awareness of the project was low. Using the CIALCA project as an example which is made of several institutions that all accepted to work under CIALCA. Everyone in Africa RISING should work under the Africa RISING umbrella. It was agreed to develop branding strategies. The USAID logo should be used judiciously.

Action: Communications team to work with USAID team on marking and branding guidelines to ensure they are in line with USAID's guidelines. Guidelines to be published on the wiki. Respect of branding guidelines to be made part of partner contracts.

h) *Science advisory panel*: Hoeschle-Zeledon reported that the West Africa Steering Committee was in agreement with the ESA PSC proposition of having a mix of academics and practitioners, and gender. The previous discussion had been deferred to the PCT but the PCT had not made progress so far. It was requested the next PCT meeting to come up with draft terms of reference.

Action: Raise issue with the PCT in their next meeting.

Glover noted that an outside advisory team was a good idea because it would add a lot of value to the program and to USAID's evaluation. The sooner the panel was in place the better, preferably this year. However, he said he was not sure of the logistics of making it effective beyond sending over documents to review to already busy people. Manyong explained that the project can learn from others such as the HumidTropics CRP which also had an advisory committee. He said the identified members of the committee had been contacted with ToRs detailing what would be expected of them including time commitments and that membership was voluntary. So if a person accepted the invitation, they are committed to be active. It was also suggested to keep them more engaged by inviting them to annual review meetings.

Action: To get guidance from PCT on how to operationalize it and PCT to prepare guidelines. Also get advice from the Director for HumidTropics Program since Africa RISING is part of it on whether it can benefit from the HumidTropics advisory body.

3 Management and implementation issues encountered since last PSC meeting (Hoeschle-Zeledon & Bekunda)

a) *Very late submission of research proposals/work-plans by partners and delays and complications in signing of contracts*: These led to delayed disbursement of funds and late start of project activities. In WA some researchers were questioning the Project Coordinator's and Chief Scientist's mandate to question research proposals.

Action: Change ToR of PSC to include that only proposals and budgets approved by Hoeschle-Zeledon and Bekunda are forwarded to the PSC for final decision. It was agreed before close of review meeting tomorrow, to communicate that to research partners and the deadlines.

b) *Delay in reporting and not respecting guidelines*: Hoeschle-Zeledon reported that many of the project research teams sent their reports very late and did not respect the formats given.

Action: To send first reminder to concerned scientists and for the second reminder copy in the person who signed the agreement. Also make phone calls to understand their challenges.

c) *Delays in submitting financial reports*: It was reported that from Tanzania, two partners did not submit their final financial reports. As a consequence last installment was not paid by IITA.

Action: Project management was requested to involve the IITA Regional Finance Officer (Alex Omodo) to follow up with the partner institutions to sort out the issues.

d) *Contract value below many of the CG Centers' minimum value*: Various CG Centers had complained that the amount of money they were receiving per contract was below their minimum value. However, most centers got multiple contracts so when these were combined the amount was indeed higher. However, they were signed as individual contracts for ease of managing the funds and

reporting. Glover wondered whether a MoU between Africa RISING and these Centers about long-term funding would help. Hoeschle-Zeledon informed that this was already being done in Mali for the main partner to assure them of funding for three years as long as AR is receiving donor funding.

Action: Ask for detailed plans for the next three years from the project teams though the funds will be disbursed annually as the project is an evolving project.

e) *Baseline survey:* The M&E team is now in place. The survey is nearly completed in Malawi and soon starting in Tanzania.

f) *Limited partnership in Malawi and lack of active participation from partners:* It was observed in the interactions, that the Malawi research team leader answered all the questions during the stakeholder meeting. Hoeschle-Zeledon informed PSC she had requested him to make it more participatory and ask the partners what they can contribute not just telling them what to do.

Action: To follow-up more closely and ensure that the partners fully participate in research planning and execution.

g) *Lack of innovative research:* Researchers tend to continue doing what they have always done therefore the management receives proposals unrelated to the research framework and with no really new research ideas. It shows limited knowledge of and adherence to the research framework.

h) *Timely execution of activities:* Some of the project teams were lagging behind in the implementation of the project activities. It was hoped that as partners gained better understanding of the project, this will lead to more commitment

i) *Growing need to align to more USAID projects:* While this was a good idea which will help the development component of the project, the question was raised on how to operationalize these partnerships e.g. NAFKA, INVC and iAGRI. It was noted for some of the initiatives such as iAGRI, the ways to collaborate were very clear but not so with others. It was also noted that for some of the collaborations, such as NAFKA it could still be early for concrete collaboration.

Action: Jerry to follow up with the mission in Tanzania. Maybe hold next annual meeting in Tanzania and invite the other USAID funded projects..

j) *Partnering with SIMLEZA-* As above, the AR was also seeing to collaborate with SIMLEZA, another USAID funded project in Zambia. The management would need support from USAID and from the mission on how to proceed so it does not seem like AR is imposing.

k) *Re-defining research teams to consolidate and avoid duplication:* There was need to have all teams working on similar research areas to work together. For example, the mycotoxins, vegetables, maize breeding and fertilizer trials had the same teams but working on different sites. There was need to look into how to arrange the research teams.

Action: See what each organization is doing in different sites. If they have a lot in common, they can be merged. Consider merging activities for next year. This year researchers should be tasked to look at this issue.

l) *CGIAR partners not on site:* Some of the CG partners do not have staff or partners in the project countries but had to implement or supervise implementation from Kenya or Malawi. This is often due to lack of capacity in these countries. Some of the CG centres also do not have the capacities AR need.

Action: It was recommended to see whether their efficiency was affected due to their distance because for most CG centres that is how they operated. It was also agreed to put emphasis on building capacity of national partners in phase 2.

m) *How do we make the partnership more effective?* It was reported some of the partners had not produced any results, yet they were currently asking for more funds.

Action: It was agreed to be stricter on reporting by partners.

n) *Erratic rainfalls:* Late rains this year had affected and delayed many of the project's activities.

Overall remarks: The PSC chair thanked the project management for bringing these issues to the attention of the PSC and keep the PSC updated. The team was also advised to work with the PSC to address these issues as they arise and not wait until the annual meeting.

4 Reflection on stakeholders meeting on previous day (Glover)

a) Changes at USAID: Glover informed the PSC that USAID had done some restructuring and Food Security now had several pillars. One of them was the Innovation Centre. Within the Center there were 5 to 6 major projects including two that will directly interact with small scale innovations, one on small-scale irrigation and the other is the Sustainable Intensification innovation Lab (former SANREM CRSP). The new innovation labs will replace the Collaborative Research Support Programs or CRSPs). Glover further said he was working on a proposal on how to compliment other activities in Africa under the sustainable intensification innovation lab including the role of American university in capacity building. For now, Glover said, Africa RISING was one of six programs he is now involved in and trying to align these programs to fit will demand a lot of his attention and therefore time spent on Africa RISING will significantly drop. Africa RISING success had led to these new developments.

Glover also pointed out that the different funding streams for SI work in addition to the Feed the Future that is funding Africa RISING such as climate change from Africa Bureau and the Bureau for Economic Growth, Education, and Environment (E3). The US Congress currently does not want them to overlap and therefore funding from two streams cannot go to the same region or area. However, USAID are trying to develop a site in Malawi and Zambia with funds from other streams – USD350 from Africa RISING to further these issues, and USD 350 from Biodiversity Office being channeled through CIFOR. How the project will look like was not yet clear. He said that USAID staff were here to explore this and would visit Zambia after the meeting. We would like to continue pursuing these funding streams focusing on sustainability and looking at the broader picture – looking at livelihoods and landscape of which food security is one component.

b) Overall impression of the presentations at the stakeholder meeting:

1. Sustainability: We need to refocus on the sustainability issue. The program is well grounded and has made a lot of progress on agronomic practices and partnerships, but now needs to address sustainability. I came out of a meeting in Accra, Ghana where we noted it was easier to deal with intensification. For sustainability there was still need to come up with indicators, and a framework. Africa RISING could be a pioneer who has such a framework and makes it operational. I have received suggestions from Rusike, Bekunda and Mourik for economics, environment and food security aspects and at different levels, farm and community level. I propose to have a small focus group working on sustainability. We need to include the necessary indicators if they are missing and suggest to researchers.

Action: Jerry to continue to lead this effort in consultation with PCT team, taking on board ILRI and IWMI.

2. Visualizing integration: It was difficult to see how the different interventions worked at the farm level. Use story board to see how interventions address challenges and how activities fit together in the farming systems. There are different activities at the farm level, some at different times of the year but it is difficult to visualize the integration. How do all interactions make a difference to an identified system? We need a generic illustration to show the interactions of different activities.

Action: Jerry to follow up with IITA communications on the illustrations.

Comment: External stakeholders provided very good feedback.

5 M&E and project mapping tool update (Haile)

Haile shared the electronic IFPRI Project Mapping Tool for putting together data from different sources. The data to characterize sites was from baseline and geo-referenced. The data can be used for stratification of different sites, give better description of sites within each mega-site. It will also link AR with the rich dataset IFPRI has. The map will work with new and existing indicators. The data management site allows for exportable tables of data. Indicators can be summarized and compared. Testing of the tool was done in Sept 2012, and in May 2013 it was made accessible to the M&E IFPRI team for further testing and feedback. The plan is to release it by November this year during the M&E meeting. The data will be linked to the AR wiki page. Partners and scientists should be able to add data. One or two persons from each country will be given administrator rights. It will be possible to see the changes they have made. Team is already working on training manual. These will be released together. Develop data sharing protocol and policies.

Questions & Comments: Glover: USAID would like to have a standardized tool for data management. IFPRI and the Harvest Choice team should have a robust platform that would serve as a model for all USAID funded research projects. USAID will require such robust tools and all researchers to use it. So if we do not develop one, it will be imposed on us. If additional resources are needed, there is allowance for that. This should be our primary tool for data management. The new upcoming projects will also need such tools. So the current PMT should be made more applicable.

Action: Arinaitwe from CIAT had offered to set up a data storage and management system developed with funds from McKnight. IFPRI M&E team to liaise with him. The PMT is not a tool for raw data. So Arinaitwe and IFPRI team to understand the different levels. The issue is common to all CGIAR CRPs therefore also check with the Director of HumidTropics on the strategies they are putting in place and learn from them. Haile to follow up with Azzarri on these issues.

6 Communications update (Njuguna)

Action: The Communications team will work on the pictorial presentations of the issues at the farm level. The different activities at different times and how they integrate. Follow up with Kathy Lopez.

7 Staff update, briefing on WA Steering Committee meeting and PCT meeting (Hoeschle-Zeledon)

Staff: We have regional M&E specialists on board, recruiting a Research Communications Specialist and an Agriculture Economist.

Feedback from WA PSC: The following recommendations were made by the WA PSC:

- (i) PCT should consider an external mid-term review for areas where a review would help; Jerry to discuss requirements with USAID; could be a role of the science advisory panel.
- (ii) PSCs should raise agenda items for PCT meetings
- (iii) broad partnerships important but we should be willing to let go of some partners if necessary and make those partners we really want happy.

Glover said the project should anticipate external review of Africa RISING in the fourth year commissioned by USAID. It would help if the project did its own review before this, best in year 3.

Feedback from PCT: At the June PCT meeting the following decisions were taken:

- Science Advisory Panel: TOR to be developed until next PCT
- Gender Strategy: draft will be prepared until December (ILRI gender specialist)
- Livestock integration: is framework needed? To be tackled during learning event
- Program-level good practice 'rules of engagement' with farmers (including data practice) to be developed: consultant to be engaged

- Regional log frames to be developed
- Photo journalist to travel to Ghana in October, next season to TZ and ET

8 PSC membership

Replacement for AfricaRice in the PSC: ICRISAT for coming year, thereafter IWMI, CIMMYT.

As decided last year, Malawi should be represented on the PSC.

Action: Coordinator to prepare invitation letter to ICRISAT; ask DARS in Malawi to nominate a representative.

As for absenteeism it was recommended to suggest to all PCT members to nominate an alternative person to represent them when unavailable.

Suggestion: PSC members who are not in management and implementation to participate in events in the field to see activities on the ground.

9 Next activities and upcoming events (Hoeschle-Zeledon)

- Finalization of research plans and budget (15 Sept.)
- Approvals by Steering Committee (30 Sept.)
- Contract renewals and fund disbursement (15 Oct.)
- Progress report to USAID (30 Oct.)
- Report on FtF indicators (Oct.)
- Regional project implementation plan, hypotheses, logframe (end of the year)
- SIMLEZA - Africa RISING alignment
- Recruitment of economist and comms specialist
- Learning event (24-26 Sept.) <http://africa-rising.wikispaces.com/learning1>
- M&E meeting (11-13 Nov.) <http://africa-rising.wikispaces.com/Moneval2>
- PCT meetings (27 Sept. & Dec.) <http://africa-rising.wikispaces.com/pct3>

10 AOB

ASARECA Assembly, Scientific Conference and Exhibition: will be held from 9 – 13th December in Bujumbura. It brings together practitioners from as East and Central Africa and beyond. Africa RISING Program could have an exhibition booth and make a presentation.

Suggestion: PCT to decide on form of participation

Rice research in Tanzania: It was agreed to look at alternative partners as rice is an important crop in the country and it was also among the priority crops of the US mission. It would be difficult to sell Africa RISING to the mission if rice was left out. Also explore possibility of partnering with IRRI. There are still funds available due to Africa Rice pulling out. This can go into work on rice once a partner is identified. Options for sites are Kilombero or Morogoro.

Action: Rwomushana (ASARECA) to send contact of different institutions in Tanzania

Next meeting will be held on the occasion of the annual planning meeting 2014.