



Africa RISING West Africa Steering Committee Meeting

31 March 2016

Accra, Ghana

Minutes of Meeting

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FEED THE FUTURE
The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Present

1. Michael Abberton, IITA – Chair (representing Robert Asiedu)
2. Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon, IITA - Secretary
3. Sara Signorelli, IFPRI (representing Carlo Azzari)
4. Tabo Ramadjita, ICRISAT
5. Asamoah Larbi, IITA
6. Jonathan Odhong', IITA
7. Diarisso Niamoye Yaro, IER
8. Kehinde Makinde, AGRA

Apologies

1. Carlo Azzari, IFPRI
2. Ousmane Ndoeye, CORAF
3. Abdou Tenkouano, AVRDC
4. Robert Asiedu, IITA
5. Jerry Glover, USAID

Agenda

1. Welcome of PSC members
2. Follow up on action points from previous meeting
3. Challenges from project management perspective (Hoeschle-Zeledon, Project Manager)
4. Review of implementation of Data Management Plan; use of Project Monitoring and Mapping Tool and discussion of way forward (S. Signorelli, IFPRI)
5. Update on status of Sustainable Intensification Indicator Framework (I. Hoeschle-Zeledon)
6. Update on Project and Program Communication activities and plans (J. Odhong', Project Communication Specialist)
7. Reflection on Africa RISING research achievements based on day 1 presentations; findings of reviewers
8. Briefing about ESA Steering Committee meeting, PCT and SAG (I. Hoeschle-Zeledon)
9. PSC membership (replacement of AVRDC) and other PSC issues (level of participation of PSC members,...)
10. Next activities and upcoming events (I. Hoeschle-Zeledon)
11. Any Other Business (AOB)

The meeting started at 8:30 and was called to order by Michael Abberton, Deputy Director IITA West Africa hub (standing in for Robert Asiedu).

1. Welcome

Abberton welcomed members to the fourth Africa RISING West Africa Steering Committee meeting. Quick introduction by members round the table followed and members proceeded to deliberate the items on the meeting's agenda.

2. Follow up on action points from previous meeting

Members reviewed minutes from the previous steering committee and majority of the action points noted at the previous meeting had been implemented. The following points were however noted for further action or for the committee records:

Exchange visits

Zeledon noted that the exchange visit didn't happen as was planned due to various factors that made it impossible to hold.

Execution of agreements (Mali)

The substantive action point on this issue was implemented. In addition Ramadjita brought it to the attention of members that ICRISAT overhead had been raised to 18.2% since the previous meeting and this will have implications for sub-contracts by the institution.

Write up on scalable technologies

Larbi noted that writing up description of scalable technologies from the project was partially done. He also informed the members that USAID had also requested for this write-up and he expected a final description of technologies ready for scaling to be ready by mid-April.

Finalization of the West Africa project document

Larbi explained that the project document wasn't developed as had been resolved in the previous meeting because the request came towards the end of the first phase of the project especially considering that its contents were bound to change in the possible second phase of the project. He therefore suggested that this task be focused on as part of the fundamental documents for Africa RISING phase 2.

Action

- A project proposal will be developed for phase 2. Larbi to oversee this
- Project Theory of Change/Impact Pathway is in advanced stage of development and will be part of the Africa RISING Phase 2 proposal.

3. Challenges from project management perspective

Zeledon briefed the committee about some challenges the project manager's point of view over the past year.

- Compliance with data management policy is still not satisfactory. Quality publications (see under 4) still not forthcoming from the West Africa project team. In certain cases the team have even published in certain sub-standard journals and where the peer review processes is not thorough.

Action: Encourage scientists to go to conferences and prepare a conference papers that can then later be developed into full publications. Also planning of publications at the beginning of the work was noted as an essential element in addition to ensuring that all ongoing work clearly defined research questions. Larbi to oversee implementation of these suggestions

- Recognition of research and other contributions from IFPRI and WUR, gender specialist and economist; poor response to their requests for support and feedback.

Action: Needs leadership from the Chief Scientist; ask B. van Lauwe what can be learned from other projects about use of typologies

- Post-harvest and dry-season vegetable production activities not moving forward despite huge investments in equipment and infrastructure.

Action: Larbi & Zeledon to ensure hiring of appropriate staff to implement post-harvest activities; Larbi to ensure better planning and coordination of dry-season vegetable work.

- R4D Platforms are expected to play important role, yet they are not functional

Action: Consultancy to be offered to a platform Coordinator from Africa RISING Ethiopia (Zelalem Lema) to share experiences and how the platforms in Ethiopia work as a means of initiating a change in coordination of platforms in West Africa. Zeledon to invite the consultant.

- The capacity and commitment of SARI in implementing research activities and meeting their obligations under Africa RISING remains wanting

- Collaboration with USAID Mission in Ghana and their projects hasn't occurred to the expected level although initial steps towards this have been made

Action: Zeledon and Larbi to continue pursuing regular interaction with the Mission and their projects.

4. Review of implementation of Data Management Plan; use of Project Monitoring and Mapping Tool and discussion of way forward

Signorelli gave an introductory presentation about the PMMT and how it works. In the presentation, she also explained the data access protocols that apply for all Africa RISIG partners using the PMMT while emphasizing that upload of data to the online repository was a compulsory requirement by USAID of all partners involved in the project. In the presentation, the committee was also updated on the progress with data upload into CKAN as at March 2016. It was noted that while some improvement had been registered in the number of data uploads, much still needed to be done to ensure partners upload their data. Members also noted that there needed to be a better mechanism for monitoring the data collected per experiment against the data uploaded to CKAN.

Action

- Since compliance with data management policy is compulsory, it was agreed that henceforth all work plans submitted by project partners will have to indicate which experimental data is to be collected as means of ensuring that there is a mechanism for enforcing the data upload to CKAN requirement. This will be supervised by the Chief Scientist (Larbi).
- The Chief Scientist (Larbi) will also have to ensure that research questions are well articulated by all partners and each should have well outlined research design and a data collection plan that will ensure the research questions are answered.

5. Update on status of Sustainable Intensification Indicator Framework

Zeledon noted that the indicator framework provides indicators and metrics and measuring methods for the already established 5 dimensions of SI to make it possible to assess how project interventions affect these dimensions at different scales (plot/field, farm, household, landscape/admin unit). This initiative is currently being led by the Innovation Lab on Sustainable Intensification at Kansas State University and a broad working group for wider acceptance, incl. Africa RISING. The goal is to have the framework adopted by Africa RISING for phase 2.

6. Update on Project and Program Communication activities and plans

A presentation outlining the project's online presence and reach was made by Odhong' to the committee members. Africa RISING uses various online tools as part of its communication strategy. The tools include Yammer, Wiki, CG space, Website, Flickr and SlideShare. In summary, the project has 1,015 photos on Flickr, 104,702 reports about its work published on CG space, nearly 200 project partners engaging in various ways on the project wiki and millions of unique views of Africa RISING related content on the web.

7. Reflections on Africa RISING research achievements based on day 1 presentations;

The committee members took a moment to reflect on the presentations made by various project partners on the previous day as follows:

Diarisso Niamoye Yaro

Partnership between CGIAR Centers and NARS, esp. IER in Mali, should be strengthened.

Tabo Ramadjita

There are technologies ready for wider scaling, but they need to be focused and streamlined. They need further scrutiny and refinement. There are few cases where a linkage with other projects is needed e.g. aflatoxins. ICRISAT is working on aflatoxin mitigation in groundnut while Africa RISING is focused on maize. I see opportunity here for linkage.

Kehinde Makinde

The private sector will need to play a crucial role in phase 2 of Africa RISING to get the research down to the end users. We also should consider the issue of farmer participation in our meetings. Maybe we can involve them in other different events from this review and planning meeting.

Irmgard H. Zeledon

It is a great development that we now have the typology results out. These should help in targeting our technologies in phase 2.

Michael Abberton

There were certain bits of research work presented that still need a lot of work. Integration is also still not overt or clearly established. Do the students have a platform for discussion of their research?

Asamoah Larbi

In phase 2 we need to do more research capacity building in Mali because in certain cases NGOs have been left to collect technical data and this can easily be avoided if we get graduate students. We should also consider creating a stronger interaction among the Africa RISING students.

8. Briefing about ESA Steering Committee meeting, PCT and SAG

Zeledon gave the following updates about deliberation at the previous **East and Southern Africa steering committee** meeting.

- The issue of data upload to CKAN by project partners is also being given attention by the ESA steering committee. At the previous meeting this was discussed and they resolved that funding of new research proposals will strictly depend on compliance with the data management plan.
- The steering committee also sought to highly encourage more regular team meetings for follow up and taking corrective measures if required.
- The committee strongly recommended to better present what new information Africa RISING is generating from its research.
- The participation of project partners in meetings is sometimes limited to them sending their junior staff to meetings. The committee advised to make it explicit to partners that this will not be accepted by stating it overtly in the invitation letters for meetings.
- Increasingly positive image of the project has led to wider interest, especially by USAID missions in the region.
- Increased focus on gender issues is positive contribution to the research.
- As observed in West Africa, in ESA too integration of activities is still not so obvious when partners present their activities.
- More attention needs to be paid to risks associated with the tested and validated technologies.
- The ESA steering committee was considering the possibility of commissioning simulation modeling to address systems stability, trade-offs, risks and profitability.

On the **Program Coordination Team (PCT)**, Zeledon had the following updates:

- The PCT had a retreat in June 2015 in Washington DC. During the retreat the team was invited for a presentation on what Africa RISING is doing at the USAID offices.
- The PCT had a follow up meeting in September 2015 at Wageningen University in the Netherlands to draft different elements of the phase 2 proposal. This meeting was combined with a workshop on typologies.
- Later in October 2015, the PCT also held a meeting in Bamako, Mali during the Program Strategy Workshop where they refined further (with contributions from the partners invited for the strategy workshop) various aspects of the phase 2 proposal.
- In March 2016 the PCT also held a meeting in Arusha, Tanzania to finalize the umbrella phase 2 proposal and review the regional proposals from West Africa, East and Southern Africa and Ethiopia.
- The PCT continues to hold several online meetings to monitor progress towards development of phase 2 proposals (1 umbrella document, 3 regional proposals, 1 M&E proposal)

With regards to the **Science Advisory Group (SAG)** Zeledon noted that the team had not held a meeting since November 2014 and the Chair and 2 members had resigned while one replacement has joined. Generally the SAG has been put on hold until the commencement of the possible phase 2.

9. PSC membership (replacement of AVRDC) and other PSC issues (level of participation of PSC members,...)

Zeledon informed the committee that AVRDC's term will be ending in September 2016. The meeting decided to invite IWMI to replace AVRDC for one year as this is a rotational seat. She also reported that the new CSIR DG had replaced the previous one as a member, however, he had not responded to the invitation for this meeting. Zeledon also noted that CORAF had not been attending the steering committee meetings since 2013 and that there was generally poor feedback over the last year from steering committee members to requests from the Secretary.

Action:

- Zeledon to invite IWMI to join the steering committee as of 1 October 2016.
- To inform the new CORAF DG on membership of the steering committee and ask for regular attendance of meetings and attention to requests (Zeledon).

10. Next activities and upcoming events

The following are the key dates for upcoming events in the project as presented by Zeledon.

- Submission of technical report to donor in April, 2016
- Finalization of 2016 work plans by 6 April, 2016 (submission to Zeledon)
- Draft umbrella proposal submission on 22 April, 2016
- Draft regional proposal submission on 5 May, 2016 (after editing)
- Final evaluation report by USAID external evaluators end April, 2016
- Phase 1 program summary report (end 2016)

11. Any Other Business

There being no other business, the meeting ended 12:30 pm.

Ibadan, 22 April 2016

I. Hoeschle-Zeledon (Secretary) and J. Odhong'

PSC Africa RISING West Africa Project