

ISSD Uganda



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Facilitation of seed sector innovations in West Nile

Using multi-stakeholder platforms for co-ownership of change

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"Getting us to talk about seed the whole day is a good decision by ISSD Uganda. We get to know who is doing what for West Nile farmers. I also like the fact that I was listened to as a farmer, especially for my challenges in accessing good quality seed." **Beatrice Anyerango, Chairperson of the Farming and Animal Rearing Association**

Stakeholders designing innovative solutions for seed sector bottlenecks

The Integrated Seed Sector Development (ISSD) programme in Uganda has established and supported a multi-stakeholder platform (MSP), which brings together stakeholders in the West Nile region in Uganda for continuous dialogue on seed sector issues. In coming together collaboratively, seed actors search for solutions to key bottlenecks

in the seed value chain. A detailed situational analysis and stakeholder mapping; careful design of the multi-stakeholder process; establishment of a functional MSP; and effective facilitation of stakeholder collaboration have resulted in endorsement of two new seed quality resolutions in Arua and Koboko districts. These resolutions have empowered the district agricultural officers (DAOs) as well as the Uganda National Agro-Dealers Association (UNADA) in their fight against counterfeit seed. UNADA reported that the *"Systematic registration process of agro-dealers has been very helpful to get to know them better and it has been instrumental to sensitise our members on counterfeit seed."* The secretary of production of Arua District Production Office confirmed that, *"With the new resolution in place, we have been able to close agro-dealer shops selling fake seed."* These tangible results show the success of the MSP.

This brief describes the different steps in the multi-stakeholder process facilitated by ISSD Uganda. A successful innovation project on fighting counterfeit seed is highlighted as an example of institutional change fostered by stakeholder collaboration. The challenges encountered in the facilitation of MSP processes are also outlined, as well as the importance of good facilitation. The note concludes with a number of key lessons learnt.

Key bottlenecks in accessing quality seed

Farmers in West Nile, as elsewhere in Uganda, are faced with numerous challenges in accessing quality seed. Generally, seed is an expensive input, whereas its quality is often low with high levels of impurities, mixtures of different varieties and low germination rates, resulting in low crop productivity. Because of weak linkages between farmers and research organisations, new varieties do not always respond to farmers' demands. Seed regulations are also weak and not enforced, and counterfeit seed in the West Nile seed market, as in other areas of Uganda, is a serious problem. These factors discourage farmers to invest their limited financial resources in buying quality seed. Weak coordination

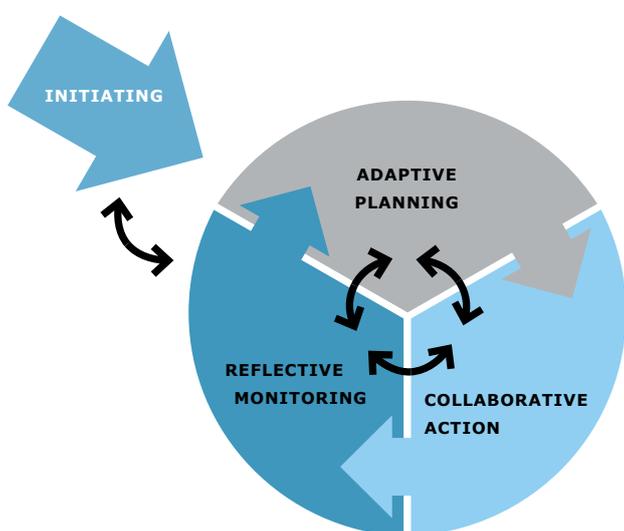
between seed sector stakeholders is a hindrance in tackling seed value chain bottlenecks in the region.

To respond to these issues, the ISSD team at the Abi Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Institute (ZARDI) established a seed MSP in the West Nile region in 2013. The platform objective was to engage with key West Nile seed sector stakeholders for dialogue and information sharing on key seed sector bottlenecks; work together on solutions to these bottlenecks; and, align and coordinate various actors' seed interventions in the zone.

The West Nile multi-stakeholder process

In order to be effective, a MSP process needs to be well designed. Even if every MSP process is different, a sequence of different steps/phases has to be considered. Generally, MSP processes should follow iterative phases of initiating, adaptive planning, collaborative action, reflective monitoring, and again adaptive planning (Brouwer et al., 2015). Figure 1 shows the MSP process model, with examples of what the different phases involve.

Figure 1: The MSP process model
(with some modifications reproduced from Brouwer *et al.*, 2015)



1 Initiating

- Determine MSP objectives
- Undertake situational analysis
- Generate stakeholder interest and support

2 Adaptive planning

- Identify opportunities for action
- Agree on change strategies
- Divide roles and responsibilities

3 Collaborative action

- Elaborate detailed action plans
- Manage implementation of actions
- Sustain stakeholder commitment

4 Reflective monitoring

- Create a learning environment
- Develop and implement monitoring mechanisms
- Review progress and generate lessons

In West Nile, the ISSD team first analysed the current situation and mapped the key stakeholders in the seed sector. These stakeholder were then invited to attend several MSP meetings. In these meetings, stakeholders generated a diversity of innovative ideas to address identified bottlenecks in the West Nile seed sector, and planned for remedial actions. To assess the appropriateness of these actions, proposals have been developed to pilot solutions to addressing the bottlenecks in different

innovation projects. From these, stakeholders selected one innovation project for implementation. Finally, stakeholders evaluated the results of this innovation project and discussed follow up steps needed to scale-up the strategy.

Initiating an MSP: understanding the context

The ISSD team met with key stakeholders in the zone to get a better understanding of their roles in the seed sector (see Table 1).

Table 1. Seed sector stakeholders in West Nile

No	Stakeholders	Roles
1	Farmer/seed users	The clients of seed companies and other seed sellers; who are searching for quality seed to improve crop productivity
2	Farmer associations	Represent of farmers' interests in agriculture
3	Local seed businesses (LSBs)	Production and local marketing of quality seed
4	Seed companies	Seed multiplication and seed sales
5	West Nile chapter of UNADA	Represent agro-dealers to protect their interests
6	National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO)	Technology development and dissemination, including varietal development
7	National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS)	Seed procurement and provision of agricultural extension services
8	Chief Administrative Office(CAO)	Provision of administrative support and financial control in district administration. Represented by assistant chief administrative officer in charge of production
9	District Agriculture Department	Represented by district agricultural officer (DAO) providing extension services, input quality monitoring and technical backstopping to farmers in their district
10	District Production Office	Oversight and coordination of the operations of the district's agricultural activities
11	District Agricultural Committees	The connection between technical wing and political wing is the agricultural committee headed by Secretary Production (literally s/he is the Minister of Agric. at district). They have roles of monitoring and supervision, policy passing and sensitisation
12	Department of Seed Inspection and Certification of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) represented by the DAOs	Quality assurance of agricultural inputs in the district; DAO heads the Crop Department which offers agricultural extension services
13	Local and international NGOs	Provision of agricultural support and bulk buyers of seed
14	Banks and microfinance institutes	Provision of credit to professional seed multipliers
15	Media	Communication on seed issues

The situational analysis provided the ISSD team with the opportunity to introduce themselves during the interviews as newcomers to the region, and to present the ISSD Uganda approach and objectives. During the interviews, stakeholders were asked to reflect on their own roles, as well as to reflect on the roles and responsibilities of other stakeholders. In addition, they were asked to share their views on opportunities and challenges in the seed sector. The comprehensive seed sector analysis provided the ISSD team with insight into the complexity of the seed sector and gave a solid basis for facilitating stakeholder collaboration in MSPs.

Many stakeholders raised the issue of fake seed in the market. The majority of farmers interviewed indicated that they had, in the past, received or bought inferior quality seed. Seed companies complained that their brand names have been misused, with tags of their companies found on illegally packed fake seed. Agro-dealers indicated that farmers often lack knowledge on the seed products they buy and, as such, can be easily misled.

Adaptive planning: generating ideas for action in zonal platform meetings

Stakeholders for the first West Nile MSP meeting held in Arua in August 2013 were carefully selected and personally invited based upon their authority for decision-making within their organisation. The meeting was well attended by a wide range of stakeholders, representing government, private sector, civil society, farmer organisations and academia. Participants showed great enthusiasm in discussing issues related to the availability and access to quality seed. After a presentation of the seed sector situational analysis and stakeholder mapping, and the approach of ISSD Uganda, participants discussed the implications of the analysis in working groups. This was followed by discussions on constraints affecting the seed sector in general and local seed businesses (LSBs), more specifically. Discussions focussed around: (i) access to inputs and finance for seed production – how to improve access to foundation seed, fertilisers, pesticides, labour-saving technologies and credit; (ii) LSB capacity development – how to strengthen the capacities of farmer groups in seed



Group discussion on key challenges in the seed sector during the first MSP meeting in Arua in 2013

production, seed marketing and seed business; (iii) seed quality assurance for LSBs – how to decentralise seed quality assurance with a potential role for the district’s Crop Department; and, (iv) counterfeit seed – which measures to take in counteracting counterfeit seed and farm inputs in West Nile markets.

Each group came up with preliminary seed sector intervention ideas and ranked them according to the urgency of the issue. Priorities were presented in plenary. Based on voting by all participants, three priority areas were identified which are in number of decreasing importance: (1) addressing counterfeit seed in the market through proactive initiatives; (2) tailoring extension systems to meet the local demand for seed production; and (3) developing entrepreneurial skills of LSBs in quality seed production and marketing. After the meeting, the ISSD team engaged in one-on-one discussions with different stakeholders to better understand the issues raised during the meeting and which one should have the highest priority.

In the second MSP meeting in November 2013, participants confirmed the selected priority areas, with fighting counterfeit seed as a top priority. Counterfeit seed has devastating effects on farmers and other stakeholders, including increasing production costs, distorting market prices and forcing genuine agro-input dealers out of business. Workshop participants designed intervention strategies and developed implementation plans to cope with the different issues. At the end of the November meeting, a core working group was established to review and refine the implementation plans, adding clear outputs and milestones. The group consisted of DAOs of two districts, a ZARDI representative, one CBO representative, and a representative of the agro-dealers supported by

the ISSD team. The group detailed a proposal to address counterfeit seed through district resolutions to empower DAOs to act against counterfeiters in their districts.

With the proposal approved by ISSD Uganda, the third MSP meeting in March 2014 aimed to consolidate joint stakeholder action against counterfeit seed. The ISSD project provided funding with stakeholders contributing 50% of the project budget as co-funding. The first MSP innovation project was implemented between March and December 2014. During subsequent multi-stakeholder meetings, progress and results of the project were shared and discussed and, at the same time, new innovation project ideas were developed into proposals, e.g. on increasing access to foundation seed and the promotion of LSBs’ seed (not detailed in this brief).

Collaborative action: implementing an innovation project on fighting counterfeit seed

The innovation project on fighting counterfeit seed was implemented through a partnership of NilePro Trust, offices of district production and marketing secretaries of Arua and Koboko, the DAO’s of Arua and Koboko, and UNADA. NilePro Trust took the lead in the coordination, facilitation and implementation of the project. NilePro Trust is a community-based social enterprise in West Nile experienced in MSP facilitation. Seed multiplication and marketing is one of their engagement areas.

The MSP innovation project supported Arua and Koboko local governments to develop and pass appropriate legislation to protect their farmers from counterfeit seed that was rampant. The project stakeholders worked together on the development of resolutions on quality seed for each of the two pilot districts, Arua and Koboko. The district agricul-

tural committees, headed by the secretary of production for each respective district, developed the bills and tabled them in their respective councils for debate and passing. The District Production Department, specifically the DAO, provided technical support to the bill, together with NilePro Trust and UNADA. Other stakeholders in the two districts were extensively consulted e.g. the farmers, agro-input dealers, farmer associations etc.

Finally, Arua and Koboko District Councils approved the bills into quality seed resolutions and regulations respectively. These district laws ban the sales of counterfeit seed within the districts. Dealing in fake seed is now punishable by fines and imprisonment which has empowered DAOs to reject and report counterfeit seed consignments. The resolutions are an addition to the 2006 National Seed and Plant Act and has enabled these districts to better protect farmers from fake seed dealers. No other districts in Uganda have such documents. The resolutions have had a positive influence even beyond the two participating districts, as they provided examples for other districts on how to deal with donations of free seed that are of poor quality. Other districts are following suit and are drafting similar resolutions. Other projects such as USAID Feed the Future projects have also taken up the concept and are supporting other districts, such as Lira district, to draft and pass similar resolutions.

In addition, this innovation project identified, registered and inspected agro-dealers to ensure that they are selling quality seed and are storing the seed properly. The project also created awareness at sub-county level on quality seed and counterfeits through the organisation of theatre plays at market places followed by debates, distribution of posters, and community radio broadcasts. Thea-

tre plays and community radio broadcasts were essential to obtain input from farmers on the draft district resolutions. Some radio stations are now playing theatre play recordings to sensitise their listeners on counterfeit seed and access to quality seed.



Journalists interviewing Beatrice Akuku, Amadrimaa LSB secretary at a local stakeholder meeting

As a result of this innovation project activities, relationships between seed stakeholders with local government have been strengthened. For instance in Arua district, the UNADA West Nile chapter is now allowed to use an office in the government building next to the DAO and the secretary of production and marketing which facilitates collaboration between the three offices. UNADA has started to work with the DAO to sensitise agro-dealers on new resolutions and warn UNADA members that agro-dealer shops selling fake seed will be closed. Agro-dealer registration has enabled UNADA and the DAOs to identify genuine, non-genuine agro-dealers.

Reflective monitoring: keeping track and identifying steps for follow-up

During the March 2014 MSP meeting a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the innovation project was put in place. Regular meetings were then organised during imple-

mentation to track progress on the planned activities, outputs and outcomes, and adapt the implementation plan where necessary. After project completion, the innovation project partners reflected on their collaboration. They concluded that the project was a big success because passing a resolution through district councils is not an easy task.

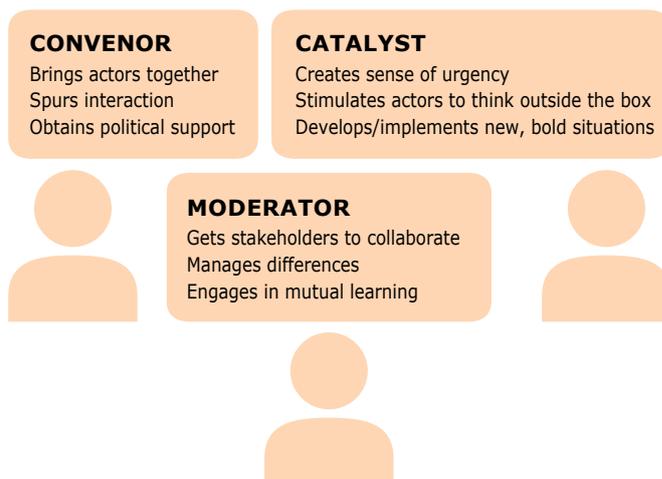
However, project partners identified a number of remaining challenges. These include: (i) ensuring effective implementation of the district seed resolution; (ii) facilitating effective promotion of the resolution; (iii) to scale out the resolution to other sub-counties, districts and zones; (iv) to keep raising awareness of agro-dealers on buying quality seed from genuine sources such as LSBs; and (v) to ensure continuous inspection of agro-dealers.

Effective MSP facilitation

For a MSP process to be effective, the process needs to be well facilitated. However, different facilitation roles are required during the process. These include providing strategic leadership; promoting out-of-the-box thinking; maintaining stakeholder commitment; creating a safe environment for experimentation and learning; promoting dialogue; solving conflicts; and organising meetings. These facilitation roles can be grouped into the three main roles: convenor, catalyst and moderator. If these roles are taken up well within the process, either through one facilitator, or through a team of facilitators, the MSP partnership will be able to overcome many barriers of working together and jointly address bottlenecks in the seed sector (Brouwer et al., 2015).

The MSP process in West Nile showed the importance of careful design and dedicated facilitation. To keep the partners engaged and committed throughout the process, in

Figure 2: MSP facilitator roles (reproduced from Brouwer et al., 2015)



addition to attending the platform meetings, many additional bilateral meetings at stakeholders' offices were held for immediate solving of issues around project collaboration and other topics. The ISSD team regularly tracked the progress of innovation projects through phone calls and e-mails whilst also sharing information on emerging seed issues. Joint field visits enabled innovation project partners to discuss and experience the practical aspects of seed challenges faced by farmers. The ISSD team also had an important role in lobbying and negotiating with partners on co-funding contributions to the innovation projects. These partner co-funding investments are of strategic importance to project ownership.

One of the challenges in the MSP process was to get stakeholders out of their predefined positions, and make them understand the problems and viewpoints of others, without judging them as good or bad. This required careful facilitation since discussions and negotiations between stakeholders could prove to be delicate. The use of interactive tools, such as coloured cards, buzzing in sub-groups and drawing mindmaps, during meetings encouraged stakeholders to actively participate in discussions, stimulated

out-of-the-box thinking, supported the generation of new ideas, and contributed to the design of innovative solutions for identified seed sector bottlenecks.

Key lessons learnt

Based on the West Nile experiences, a number of lessons on MSP facilitation have been learnt. To achieve success with the MSP, it has been important that:

- The right stakeholders were involved from the beginning; this requires careful stakeholder mapping
- Stakeholder representatives in meetings had the authority to make decisions; this avoids agreed partnership arrangements having to be renegotiated after every meeting
- The innovation project addressed issues which were a priority for all stakeholders in the partnership; only when this is the case will stakeholders actively participate and commit themselves to the process
- Stakeholders need to be willing to invest in the partnership; requirement of co-funding contributions ensures that only those stakeholders with a genuine interest join the partnership

- Clear terms of reference and an agreement were elaborated for each stakeholder in the partnership; this supports the institutionalisation of the collaboration
- Regular MSP meetings were organised; this keeps stakeholders informed and engaged with the process
- The facilitators kept investing in maintaining stakeholder relationships; this results in continuous engagement with stakeholders, also between different stakeholders in periods between the official platform meetings
- The MSP facilitators are active listeners, creating confidence and trust, managing group dynamics and are good organisers; these are essential roles to be fulfilled in supporting the MSP partnership towards successfully achieving its objectives.

References

- Brouwer, H., Woodhill, J., Hemmati, M., Verhoosel, K. and Vugt, S. 2015. The MSP guide – How to design and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships. Centre for Development Innovation, Wageningen, The Netherlands.

Colophon

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