

ISSD Africa Community of Practice

Annual progress report

1 September 2021 – 1 September 2022



ISSD Africa Community of Practice

Annual progress report
1 September 2021 – 1 September 2022

M. Thijssen¹, J. Mulkerrins¹, B. van Schagen², W. Ouko³, R. Vernooy⁴, D. Spielman⁵, M. McEwan⁶, P. Okori⁷,
G. Borman¹ and B. Kramer⁸

1 Wageningen University & Research, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation

2 Royal Tropical Institute

3 Mercy Corps

4 The Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT

5 IFPRI/CGIAR Research Program on Policies, Institutions and Markets

6 CIP/CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas

7 ICRISAT

8 IFPRI/CGIAR Collaborative Platform for Gender Research

Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation
Wageningen, December 2022

Report WCDI-22-236

Thijssen, M., J. Mulkerrins, B. van Schagen, W. Ouko, R. Vernooy, D. Spielman, M. McEwan, P. Okori, G. Borman and B. Kramer, 2022. *ISSD Africa Community of Practice; Annual progress report 1 September 2021 – 1 September 2022*. Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, Wageningen University & Research. Report WCDI-22-236. Wageningen.

Keywords: Integrated seed sector development, community of practice, Africa



© 2022 Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, part of the Stichting Wageningen Research. P.O. Box 88, 6700 AB Wageningen, The Netherlands. T + 31 (0)317 48 68 00, E info.cdi@wur.nl, www.wur.eu/cdi.



The Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation uses a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 (Netherlands) licence for its reports.

The user may copy, distribute and transmit the work and create derivative works. Third-party material that has been used in the work and to which intellectual property rights apply may not be used without prior permission of the third party concerned. The user must specify the name as stated by the author or licence holder of the work, but not in such a way as to give the impression that the work of the user or the way in which the work has been used are being endorsed. The user may not use this work for commercial purposes.

The Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation accepts no liability for any damage arising from the use of the results of this research or the application of the recommendations.

Report WCDI-22-236

Contents

1	Basic Information	5
2	Introduction	7
3	Project performance	9
	3.1 Implementation action learning projects	9
	3.2 Integration and sharing of results	11
	3.3 Operation and facilitation by ISSD Africa management	14
4	Work planning	16
5	Lessons learnt and future of ISSD Africa	17
Annexes		20



1 Basic Information

Programme title	Integrated Seed Sector Development in Africa 2019 – 2022¹
Title abbreviated	ISSD Africa 2019 – 2022
Lead	Wageningen University and Research (WUR), Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI), Wageningen, Netherlands Contact persons: Marja Thijssen; Email: marja.thijssen@wur.nl ; James Mulkerrins; Email: james.mulkerrins@wur.nl
Partner management unit	Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), Amsterdam, Netherlands Contact person: Boudy van Schagen; Email: b.v.schagen@kit.nl
Partners support unit	AfricaSeeds, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire Contact person: Kouame Miezán; Email: k.miezan@africa-seeds.org Tegemeo Institute of Agricultural Policy and Development of Egerton University, Nairobi, Kenya Contact person: John Olwande; Email: jolwande@tegemeo.org
Consortium partners/ action learning project leads	Developing the seed sector in fragile states; and Effective seed insecurity response Mercy Corps, Portland, USA Contact person: Wilfred Ouko; Email: wouko@mercy Corps.org Agrobiodiversity, seed and climate change The Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, Rome, Italy Contact person: Ronnie Vernooy; Email: r.vernooy@cgiar.org Enabling seed policies IFPRI/CGIAR Research Program on Policies, Institutions and Markets, Washington, USA Contact person: David Spielman; Email: D.Spielman@cgiar.org Enhancing seed quality assurance CIP/CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas, Nairobi, Kenya Contact person: Margaret McEwan; Email: M.McEwan@cgiar.org Business models for early generation seed ICRISAT, Nairobi, Kenya Contact person: Patrick Okori; Email: P.Okori@cgiar.org Creating demand for quality seed WCDI, Wageningen, Netherlands Contact person: Gareth Borman; Email: gareth.borman@wur.nl Gender dynamics in seed systems IFPRI/CGIAR Collaborative Platform for Gender Research, Nairobi, Kenya Contact person: Berber Kramer; Email: b.kramer@cgiar.org

¹ SDC approved a No-Cost Extension of ISSD Africa of six months until 28 February 2023. In official communication we will continue to use the name 'ISSD Africa' without the project running period attached to it.

Geographic location of programme	Africa
Programme duration	3.5 years; note that SDC has approved a No-Cost Extension until 28 February 2023
Budget from SDC	1.6 million Euro
Targeted complementary Dutch funding for CoP	600,000 Euro
Confirmed complementary Dutch funding for CoP	515,000 Euro
Confirmed complementary funding from consortium partners for ISSD Africa topics	Approximately 1.4 million Euro

2 Introduction

Context

Lack of access to quality seed² is one of the main factors hindering productivity increase in Africa. With the use of quality seed of improved and adapted varieties, experts estimate that the yield gap, i.e. the difference between the maximum achievable yield and the yield achieved in practice, may be closed by 50%³. With the growing population and increasingly stringent competing claims for arable land, continuous development and promotion of better adapted varieties is essential to increase production potential and productivity. Seed sectors with the ability to breed, select and promote the use of adapted varieties are indispensable in any strategy to mitigate the effects of climate change. Better performing seed sectors with improved smallholder farmers' access to affordable, diverse and adapted varieties and seed will have a positive impact on farmers' livelihood resilience with higher farm income, improved food and nutrition security and the sustainable use of agrobiodiversity and ecosystems.

Integrated Seed Sector Development

Enhancing the availability, access and use of quality seed is complex. Farmers access and use seed from several sources or seed systems. The Integrated Seed Sector Development (ISSD) approach supports the establishment of a seed sector that is tailored to national realities.⁴ It steps away from a one-sized approach to seed sector design and functioning, and cherishes the diversity of systems and pathways by which seed of different crops is produced, exchanged, and used for and by farmers with different needs. Its goal is to enhance reliable access of male and female farmers to sufficient quantities of quality seed of desired varieties at an affordable price. ISSD strives to increase farmers' choice in terms of crop varieties, seed quality, price and market outlets, to cater for the diversity of needs of farmers. It builds on the existing diversity of formal, intermediary and informal pathways by which seed is produced, disseminated and marketed. ISSD promotes seed sector entrepreneurship at local, domestic and international levels, but also recognises the importance of public investment in seed sector functioning. Furthermore, it promotes innovation and takes a pluralistic approach in fostering an enabling environment that is conducive to multiple situations that co-exist within a seed sector.⁵

Community of practice on seed in Africa

ISSD Africa (2019-2022) works to address key bottlenecks preventing African seed sectors reaching their potential. The Community of Practice (CoP) is a coalition of organisations which identifies, explores and promotes seed sector innovations to enable sustainable and inclusive seed sector transformation. The ISSD Africa CoP facilitates learning and communicating 'what works in seed sector development under what conditions', with the aim to support the development of vibrant, pluralistic and market-oriented seed sectors that support and protect smallholder seed producers and farmers, while stimulating professionalization and seed business. ISSD Africa unites practitioners that collectively have the capacity to experiment with, explore and ultimately overcome complex challenges that they encounter in seed sector development.

Eight action research topics

ISSD Africa works on eight action research topics. Table 1 shows the topics and partners taking the lead for the respective topics. Lead partners are recognized for their expertise in the topic area. Action on each topic is guided by experience-based and agreed upon action learning questions.

² Quality seed is viable seed or planting material that germinates well, is free from seed-borne pests and diseases, and is true to type i.e. of the variety expected by the farmer.

³ World Bank, 2007. World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development. The World Bank, Washington DC.

⁴ Louwaars, N.P. and W.S. de Boef, 2012. Integrated seed sector development in Africa: a conceptual framework for creating coherence between practices, programs and policies. *Journal of Crop Improvement* 26, 39-59.

⁵ Find a short animation video on ISSD and its guiding principles at: [Guiding principles / Principes de base – ISSD Africa](#)

Table 1 *ISSD Africa topics and lead partners*

No.	Topic	Lead partner
1	Developing the seed sector in fragile states	Mercy Corps
2	Effective seed insecurity response	Mercy Corps
3	Agrobiodiversity, seed and climate change	The Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT
4	Enabling seed policies	IFPRI/CGIAR Research Program on Policies, Institutions and Markets
5	Enhancing seed quality assurance	CIP/CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas
6	Business models for early generation seed	ICRISAT
7	Creating demand for quality seed	WCDI
8	Gender dynamics in seed systems	IFPRI/CGIAR Collaborative Platform for Gender Research

This report

The current document is the third annual report for ISSD Africa, reporting project progress over the period 1 September 2021 – 1 September 2022. Following a project overview and general introduction in chapter 1 and 2, chapter 3 reflects on the achievements over the past year, using for guidance the ISSD Africa results framework. Also ISSD Africa CoP management and facilitation is addressed in this chapter, since it relates to the third programme outcome (Enabling structure for the CoP operational). Chapter 4 provides an outlook for the activities of ISSD Africa in its final six months, and chapter 5 elaborates lessons learned and provides considerations for a next phase of the ISSD Africa CoP. The general results framework is presented in Annex 1. With this outline we address the key issues as requested by SDC for progress reporting.

The chapters of the report are largely based on the progress reports of the eight thematic action learning projects; these are the heart of the CoP. Annex 2 – 9 presents progress on each topic for the reporting period. A more or less similar reporting structure is used as compared to the overall performance of the CoP, providing for each topic: (1) key information; (2) introduction; (3) project performance; (4) project management; (5) lessons learnt; (6) outlook for the final project period; and (7) future of ISSD Africa. Note that all topics, with exception of the topic on Seed quality assurance, will make use of the six-months no-cost extension period.

Links to all annexes are provided in the report. The ISSD Africa financial report is added as a separate annex.

3 Project performance

Find in Annex 1 the ISSD Africa results framework. In this chapter we report performance against the outcomes and outputs. Find for quick reference the results framework with outcomes and outputs in Figure 1.

Impact	Improved access to sufficient, high quality, affordable, diversified seed of locally adapted varieties farmers prefer resulting in increased resilience, higher farm income, improved food and nutrition security and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity and ecosystems		
Goal	An international community of practice operationalized, steering seed sector innovation and development on the African continent		
	IMPLEMENTATION ACTION LEARNING PROJECTS	INTEGRATION & SHARING OF RESULTS	OPERATION & FACILITATION BY ISSD AFRICA MANAGEMENT
Outcomes	1. Africa-grown solutions to complex seed sector challenges developed	2. Integration of ISSD Africa derived insights in seed sector interventions and policies supported	3. Enabling structure for the effective management and facilitation of the CoP operational
Outputs	1.1 Partnerships for action learning projects operational	2.1 ISSD Africa website actively used to share seed sector information and expertise	3.1 International management unit and African support unit operational
	1.2 Action learning projects implemented	2.2 International ISSD Africa meetings facilitated	3.2 Technical advisory committee and programme steering group operational
	1.3 ISSD Africa publications developed	2.3 ISSD Africa international policy dialogues facilitated	3.3 Action learning projects supported

Figure 1 Results chain of the ISSD Africa community of practice

3.1 Implementation action learning projects

Outcome 1: Africa-grown solutions to complex seed sector challenges developed

This outcome relates to the eight thematic projects and their action learning activities. Find in Annex 2-9 the details on progress related to achievements for the eight projects. Most activities of the action learning projects have been concluded or are close to conclusion. First results and new insights have been shared with the larger seed community of Africa in the online mid-term event 21 to 23 June 2021. The concluding ISSD Africa conference as planned for October 2022 will be key for sharing final results and key insights on how to address complex seed sector challenges.

Output 1.1: Partnerships for action learning projects operational

The partnerships for the eight topics have been operational since the kick-off workshop in Nairobi in December 2019. Topic partners engaged online and in-country for a range of different activities including workshops, studies, training, pilots, evaluations, policy dialogue, etc.

Achievement of targets (see Results Framework in Annex 1):

- Target of 8 partnerships formed has been achieved
- Target of 8 partnerships meeting in the third project year has been achieved

Output 1.2: Action learning projects implemented

After readjustment of work plans because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and mainly online engagement in the first 1.5 years of the project, topic teams are now close to completion of their action research activities. Field work has been picked up and field studies and field pilots have been implemented. The pandemic has changed working modalities to now structurally include online engagement as well. The final six months mainly focus on finalizing publications and videos; and sharing of results through the ISSD Africa concluding conference and other fora. The action research links to and informs other projects and programmes as implemented by ISSD Africa partners. Topic 5-Enhancing seed quality assurance concluded all activities. Find more details on activities and progress for the eight topics in Annex 2-9, including the planning of activities for the final six months of the current ISSD Africa phase.

Achievement of targets:

- Target of 8 project learning projects implemented will only be fully achieved by the end of the project; Topic 5-Enhancing seed quality assurance has completed its activities
- Based on topic progress reports we estimate that the average target of 80% of action learning project annual work plans completed has been achieved

Output 1.3: ISSD Africa publications developed

Find in the topic progress reports as presented in Annex 2-9 for each topic the publications developed during the past project year; they include studies, briefs, working papers, strategy papers, literature reviews and peer reviewed publications developed to share the action research results over the past project year. Find key publications at the ISSD Africa website⁶. Two examples of ISSD Africa publications are: (i) the Context Analysis Tool for designing seed system interventions in conflict-affected areas⁷; and (ii) a paper on the functioning of community seed banks in various geographies⁸. Additional publications will be finalized in the coming project year. These include the eight topic synthesis papers.

ISSD Africa encourages to bring together experiences from different projects and programmes, which allows to learn from not only its own action research, but also use the CoP to share experiences from other partners, projects and programmes. ISSD Africa also invites and supports national ISSD initiatives to share interesting work. As such the CoP facilitates sharing of experiences on seed sector innovations relevant for Africa at large.

With support from professional film makers, we are currently elaborating videos presenting lessons learnt. Activities include drafting of scripts, interviewing partners, collecting visuals and aligning footage from the field. Work for the following topics and videos is in progress:

- Topic 1-Seed in fragile states: Introduction to CAT
- Topic 2-Seed emergency response: Introduction to SERT
- Topic 2-Seed emergency response: Animation on 10 guiding principles for good seed aid practice
- Topic 3-Agrobiodiversity, seed and climate change: Multiple benefits of crop diversity
- Topic 5-Enhancing SQA: Introduction to Seed Tracker
- Topic 5-Enhancing SQA: Instructions for LAMP usage in laboratory and field settings
- Topic 6-Business model innovations for EGS in Uganda
- Topic 7-Creating seed demand: Lessons for boosting market intelligence in Africa's emerging seed markets
- Topic 8-Gender and seed systems: Village champions for inclusive last-mile seed delivery

⁶ See: <https://issdafrica.org/category/publications/>

⁷ Sperling et al., 2022. Seed Systems in Conflict-Affected Areas: Context Analysis Tool. Version 1. Produced by Mercy Corps and SeedSystem as part of the ISSD Africa activity: <https://issdafrica.org/2022/07/27/seed-systems-in-conflict-affected-areas-a-context-analysis-tool/>

⁸ Vernooij et al., 2022. Farmer-Led Seed Production: Community Seed Banks Enter the National Seed Market. *Seeds* 2022, 1, 164–180. <https://doi.org/10.3390/seeds1030015>: <https://issdafrica.org/2022/07/14/farmer-led-seed-production-community-seed-banks-enter-the-national-seed-market/>

Achievement of targets:

- Target of 8 synthesis papers and 8 videos developed will only be achieved by the end of the project.

3.2 Integration and sharing of results

Outcome 2: Integration of ISSD Africa derived insights in seed sector interventions and policies supported

This outcome relates to the use of the insights as generated by the eight topic teams in new projects and programmes, by partners already directly involved in ISSD Africa as well as beyond. New approaches and tools may be tailored and scaled to new contexts. At the same time new approaches, tools and way of working may need to be scaled to policy level to allow institutionalization. We have seen examples of both in the past project year; find further details below.

Output 2.1: ISSD Africa website actively used to share seed sector information and expertise

The ISSD Africa website aims to serve as an online meeting point for seed sector experts and practitioners with an interest in seed sector development in Africa. The website shares information/resources on the ISSD Africa CoP, including information on the eight topics, publications, events and other seed related news.⁹ We use the ISSD Africa social media channel as well as channels of partners to tweet ISSD Africa content.¹⁰ The ISSD Africa newsletter informs subscribers about seed sector related events of the CoP and beyond. Alongside event-specific announcements, three general newsletters with content on progress of the different ISSD Africa topics were published in November 2021 and March and June 2022.¹¹

In 2022, the WordPress theme on which the website was based expired. For safety, a new temporary theme was selected. Development remains on-going. While the theme remains easy-to-use, arranging publications in a logical order and tracking downloads of different file types are problematic. Early in 2023, a new website theme will be launched.

Looking at the audience engagement with the ISSD Africa website, we see that the traffic remains consistent and peaks align to newsletter publication and the dates of various events. On average, there are circa 1200 page views per month. However, search engines (with 'ISSD' being by far the most common search term) are the main acquisition channel for the website. This shows that there remains a steady interest in ISSD. The ISSD Africa website continues to grow in Google rankings, making it easier to find in numerous countries. The top 10 visiting countries remain where peers are; the USA, Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Finland.

With regards to social media the ISSD Africa Twitter account remains useful for promoting events, posts of which receive satisfactory impressions. A decision will be taken on whether and how to continue with Twitter in 2023 in light of emergent policies from Twitter. LinkedIn usage is growing in African peer networks and offers opportunities for knowledge-based connections

Achievement of targets:

- Target for use of the ISSD Africa website has been achieved since number of downloads (2,500+) has been higher than the number of newsletter recipients (725)¹²
- Whereas the number of website visitors in the third project year was over 5,400, the number of nationalities was 100+¹³; this is higher to the number of countries involved in action learning (14); the target was achieved¹⁴

⁹ Find the ISSD Africa website at: <https://issdafrica.org/>

¹⁰ For twitter see: https://twitter.com/issd_africa

¹¹ Newsletter archive: <https://us4.campaign-archive.com/home/?u=25ac4752377fc30f76784956f&id=b979783bdd>

¹² Numbers based on WordPress Stats and MailChimp statistics.

¹³ Number based on WordPress Stats.

¹⁴ Whereas some studies are Africa-wide and countries can not yet be mentioned, the following countries are specifically addressed in one or more action research activities/projects (presented in alphabetical order): Burundi, DRC, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

- The number of uploads of pieces of content was an average of 3 per month over the past project year¹⁵; this is lower than the target of 5
- Whereas the target is two per annum, we published three newsletters promoting website content over the past project year

Output 2.2: International ISSD Africa meetings facilitated

The ISSD Africa mid-term event was organized in the form of the international online conference 'Guiding seed sector transformation in Africa – Durable solutions to systemic problems, in June 2021.¹⁶ This was followed by a specific mid-term TAC event focused on sharing progress and finding opportunities for cross-topic connection.

We are currently planning for the ISSD Africa closing event, to be organized as a face-to-face conference in Kigali in October 2022. IFPRI Rwanda will be co-hosting the event. We are looking forward to this event since the organization and facilitation of innovative face-to-face learning events is generally considered as one of the strengths of ISSD Africa. Even if we missed face-to-face learning opportunities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were able to organize a number of interesting webinars:

- Support to SCALE webinar: Last mile seed systems in fragile contexts; 30 March 2022¹⁷
- Hosted webinar launch of Seed Emergency Response Tool; 8 June 2022¹⁸
- Hosted webinar on Overcoming gender related barriers to boost seed entrepreneurship; 15 June¹⁹
- Hosted webinar launch of Context Analysis Tool; 27 July 2022²⁰

Based on relation and content, we also supported and/or promoted seed events of partners beyond the direct ISSD Africa topic teams; e.g. the workshop on tools for strengthening RTB seed systems.²¹ We also collaborate with the NWO-WOTRO Netherlands-CGIAR Seed Systems Development research program (NL-CGIAR SSD), a portfolio of nine seed-related projects, of which most are located in Africa.²² Because of shared objectives and overlap in partners, ISSD Africa closely collaborates with this programme at the level of sharing results and learning lessons, and generally opens events to partners of both programmes. The ISSD Africa Community of Practice currently has 850+ subscribers who regularly receive information on events and updates on results and available resources.

The recordings of events and webinars provide a rich online resource on state-of-the-art innovations in seed sector development in Africa and beyond. We use them as learning materials for online seed and genetic resources courses for mid-career professionals from Africa and beyond.

The recently established ISSD Sahel benefiting from the learning and experiences emerging from ISSD Africa. In late July/early August a 26-strong ISSD Africa delegation - representing farmers' associations; private seed companies; cooperatives; and research institutions from Mali and Niger - travelled to Burundi for a learning exchange visit, co-facilitated by KIT, to the IFDC-led Private Seed Sector Development (PSSD) project in Burundi. A second learning visit was organised between the ISSD Sahel team and ISSD Uganda with KIT support and attendance in late March 2022, with the specific objective of learning from the successes and achievements of the ISSD Uganda project. The ISSD Sahel team consisted of 30 participants. The cross-project learnings that these exchange visits have facilitated first-hand mean that new project initiatives get a 'leg up' from best-practices established by ISSD Africa Community of Practice members. One

¹⁵ Number based on WordPress stats.

¹⁶ Find recordings of all conference sessions at the ISSD Africa website: [Events – ISSD Africa](#)

¹⁷ Find more information on the webinar here: <https://issdafrica.org/2022/03/16/webinar-30-march-last-mile-seed-systems-in-fragile-contexts/>

¹⁸ Find more information on the webinar here: <https://issdafrica.org/2022/05/24/webinar-june-9-launching-the-seed-emergency-response-tool-sert/>

¹⁹ Find more information on the webinar here: <https://issdafrica.org/2022/06/15/webinar-may-18-overcoming-gender-related-barriers-to-boost-seed-entrepreneurship/>

²⁰ Find more information on the webinar here: <https://issdafrica.org/2022/06/28/new-practical-guide-seed-systems-in-conflict-affected-areas-a-context-analysis-tool/>

²¹ Find information on the workshop and a link to the toolbox here: <https://issdafrica.org/2021/10/14/opportunity-workshop-on-tools-for-rtb-crop-seed-systems/>

²² Find more information on the nine projects at: <https://knowledge4food.net/research-project/seed-systems-development-call/>

practical example is the state-of-the-art *seed roadmaps* that are being developed by ISSD Sahel consortia stakeholders which build on successes and knowledge of 'what works' in other African countries.



Photo1 ISSD Sahel group photo during learning exchange visit to Burundi, July 2022 (Photo by KIT)



Photo 2 ISSD Sahel consortium stakeholders exchanging with Burundi seed producers. July 2022 (Photo by KIT)

Achievement of targets:

- The international kick-off meeting in 2019 had 58 participants from 26 different organizations; the mid-term event had approximately 500 participants from over 100 organizations. The concluding event will be organized in October 2022. The target of 1 meeting with at least 24 organizations represented has already been achieved.

Output 2.3: ISSD Africa international policy dialogues facilitated

ISSD Africa coordination (WCDI) has a seat in the steering group of the African Seed and Biotechnology Partnership (ASBP) Platform of the African Union Commission (AUC). Also other ISSD Africa partners (IFPRI, CIMMYT) have positions in sub-committees on specific topics. The Platform is now managed by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), who took over this role from AfricaSeeds. We link with FARA in the organization of the ISSD Africa concluding conference.

Three policy dialogues have been planned, of which one has been implemented in the past project period: "Strengthening Seed Systems and Market Development in Kenya; Perspectives on political economy and policy processes". The workshop was organized in Nairobi on 19 and 20 July, by Tegemeo and Centre for African Bio-Entrepreneurship (CABE) under Topic 4-Enabling seed policies. The workshop was guided by a review of key policy, regulatory, and strategy documents relevant to maize and potato seed systems and market development, addressing policy adoption, including political economy factors which have influenced this.²³ Representatives of Topic 5-Enhancing seed quality assurance; and Topic 6-Business models for EGS contributed to the workshop.

A second policy dialogue, i.e. Seed Hub Event²⁴, is planned for September in Juba, South Sudan, with support from Topic 3-Agrobiodiversity, seed and climate change; Topic 1-Developing the seed sector in fragile states; and Topic 2-Effective seed insecurity response. Moreover, other experts from the wider ISSD Africa network will participate to support regional exchange of experiences. The workshop is organized in collaboration with the programme FNS-REPRO: building food system resilience in protracted crises, as managed by WUR.²⁵

A third policy dialogue is planned for 29 November & 30 November in Abuja, with support from Topic 1-Developing the seed sector in fragile states; and Topic 2-Effective seed insecurity response. The programme is organized by Sahel Consulting, National Agricultural Seeds Council and WUR, who are also partner in the Collaborative Seed Programme. Mercy Corps tested the SERT and the CAT as developed for Topic 1 and Topic 2 respectively, in Northern Nigeria. The tools and testing results will be shared with a wide range of stakeholders in the national Seed Connect event on 29 November and a separate workshop on 30 November.

Achievement of targets:

- The target is three policy dialogues. One policy dialogue implemented; two planned for September and November 2022.

3.3 Operation and facilitation by ISSD Africa management

Outcome 3: Enabling structure for the effective management and facilitation of the CoP operational

This outcome relates to the structure of the community of practice and addresses the management and facilitation of ISSD Africa. The necessary structures have been in operation since the first project year.

Output 3.1: International management unit and African support unit operational

WCDI hosts the international management unit, and has provided management, facilitation and technical support; KIT partnered with WCDI for providing similar support. Main tasks include: webinar support;

²³ Find more information on the policy workshop, including the workshop report, here: <https://issdafrica.org/2022/10/04/workshop-strengthening-seed-systems-and-market-development-in-kenya-perspectives-on-political-economy-and-policy-processes/>

²⁴ Find an outline of the Seed Hub Event here: https://issdafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Programme-outline-Seed-Hub-Event-South-Sudan_final.pdf

²⁵ Find more information on the FNS-REPRO programme here: <https://www.wur.nl/en/research-results/research-institutes/centre-for-development-innovation/show-cdi/fns-repro-building-food-system-resilience-in-protracted-crises.htm>

preparation for the concluding conference; general communication; facilitating partner meetings; facilitating meetings with the donors (SDC and DGIS); resource mobilization; connecting to other seed-related initiatives including African Union Commission-African Seed and Biotechnology Programme (AUC-ASBP); project administration; and monitoring and evaluation.

In relation to involvement of the African support unit, Tegemeo was instrumental in organizing the ISSD Africa kick-off workshop in Nairobi in December 2019; AfricaSeeds was instrumental in making the link to AUC-ASBP and organizing the project formulation workshop in Abidjan in 2018. The responsibility of the ASBP Platform now rests with FARA. Due to COVID-19 we did not engage with the two organizations over the past year, except for Topic 5-Enabling seed policies, in which Tegemeo was partner in organizing the ISSD Africa policy dialogue in Nairobi.

Achievement of targets:

- Because of the COVID-19 pandemic African support unit was not involved in the past project year. So target NA
- The target of 80% of the international management unit work plan completed has been achieved.

Output 3.2: Technical advisory committee and programme steering group operational

In 2019 we have established a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) with representatives of the international management unit, the African support unit and the eight topic leads. Over the past project year the committee met on 14 September 2021, and 19 April and 1 September 2022. TAC meetings evaluate joint events (like the mid-term event in the 14 September meeting); plan for upcoming events (like the concluding conference in the 1 September 2022 meeting); look into project planning as well as strategic CoP planning; share key learnings of the eight ISSD Africa topics; identify opportunities for linking between topics and cross-learning.

We did not establish a steering committee of ISSD Africa coordination, SDC and DGIS, but as coordination had separate meetings with the donors, including meetings with the SDC in the past project period, including meetings with Bruce Campbell (programme officer) 2 September; 14 September); and Daniel Valenghi (programme officer GPFS), Amsalu Andarge (national programme officer) and/or Sabine Burger (finance officer) (meetings on 14 March, 5 April and 19 April). We appreciate the constructive contributions of SDC critically thinking along for strategic guidance as well as practical issues.

In addition we had informal meetings with DGIS in which we discussed project progress as well as opportunities for Dutch complementary funding.

Achievement of targets:

- A total of 6 TAC meetings has been organized by now; the target is 6 meetings during the three-year project. We envisage 2 more meetings during the no-cost extension period.
- 2 project steering meetings were organized with SDC in the first project year, 4 meetings in the second project year, and 2 in the third project year; the target is 12 meetings during the three-year project

Output 3.3: Action learning projects supported

The coordination unit supported the topic teams specifically in communication and outreach, with the organisation of webinars and finalizing different type of documentation. This included report formatting and proofing services, as well as support to the development of videos and other knowledge products. In particular, topic teams appreciate webinar design and facilitation support. Support is based upon request and topic partnerships made use of these services at moderate level. Previous engagement of the coordination unit with topic leads/teams at bilateral level, next to TAC meetings, was appreciated and therefore continued.

Achievement of targets:

- The 8 action learning projects have been supported during the second project year
- Next to the 2 TAC meetings, the coordination unit engaged at bilateral level with topic leads/teams; TAC meetings and bilateral team meetings in March/April 2022 have been recorded; informal meetings have not been recorded.

4 Work planning

Find in Table 2 below the activity planning for the final six months no-cost extension of the project. Work plans for the individual topics are presented in Annex 2-9.

The coordination unit will focus on the preparation and facilitation of the concluding ISSD Africa conference in Kigali in October 2022, and subsequently on the development of a third ISSD Africa communique on insights and perspectives on seed sector transformation in Africa.²⁶ Next to the concluding conference, two policy workshops will be implemented: one in Juba, South Sudan in September 2022; and one in Abuja, Nigeria in November 2022.

The coordination unit will continue to support the topic teams with finalizing publications where needed (peer review, editing, layout) and will ensure publications are distributed through the website, newsletters, etc. Also considerable time will be devoted to the development of topic videos (drafting of scripts, interviewing partners, collecting visuals and aligning footage from the field); this process will be supported by a professional film maker.

At least two meetings with the TAC; and two meetings with SDC will be scheduled. The coordination unit and TAC will meet immediately after the concluding conference for evaluation and planning as well as working on contouring a next phase of ISSD Africa.

Table 2 Activity planning for the final 6-months NCE

Month	2022				2023	
	S	O	N	D	J	F
Outcome 1: Africa-grown solutions to complex seed sector challenges developed						
Support implementation of action learning projects						
Support development ISSD Africa publications						
Outcome 2: Integration of ISSD Africa derived insights in seed sector interventions and policies supported						
Facilitation of sharing of information through website, webinars, newsletter and other channels						
Preparation and facilitation of concluding conference						
Preparation and facilitation of policy dialogues						
Outcome 3: Enabling structure for effective management of the CoP operational						
Facilitate meetings of the Technical advisory committee and the steering group						
Support implementation of action learning projects						

²⁶ The African Union Commission (AUC) through the [first ISSD Africa Communiqué](#) (2011) endorsed the principles for integrated seed sector development. The [second ISSD Africa Communiqué](#) called for attention for entrepreneurship (2013).

5 Lessons learnt and future of ISSD Africa

Lessons learnt

For each of the eight ISSD Africa topics lessons are elaborated in the progress reports (Annex 2-9). This chapter provides a number of general key lessons learnt.

Online engagement has become a normal routine. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the CoP to move from face-to-face engagement to online engagement. Different tools for online engagement are now integrated in our day-to-day practice of project management and implementation.

Online engagement changed the dynamics of ISSD Africa. Online engagement adds value to a CoP, but is generally less exciting than face-to-face engagement. The fact that over the past years interaction at CoP level was restricted to online engagement made this phase of ISSD Africa less dynamic.

Recordings of online events provide for good learning materials in online courses. The recordings of ISSD Africa events and webinars, which provide for state-of-the-art innovations in seed sector development in Africa, are now used as learning materials for online courses for mid-career professionals from Africa and beyond.

Each of the eight ISSD Africa action research projects has its own dynamic. Whereas the former phase of ISSD Africa pushed all topics/projects through a process of similar activities implemented at the same time, in the current phase each topic/project has its own pace and dynamic and differs in topic team set-up, level of engagement of topic team members, type of activities, type of outputs, etc. This means that CoP management also supports each topic lead and team differently.

Linkage between ISSD Africa topics generally remains limited to engagement in international events. Linkage between ISSD Africa topics/projects 'in the field' has generally been limited to international events, i.e. the ISSD Africa mid-term event and other international meetings and fora. The policy dialogues provide opportunity to link topics within the context of the country where the dialogue takes place. We have seen this in practice in the Nairobi policy workshop.

CoP members find each other for exchange outside the eight action learning projects. Topic leads and teams also meet outside of the context of the eight action learning projects, like for example the ASBP Platform. In the context of ISSD Africa KIT supported the organization of exchange visits for cross-project learnings of the recently established ISSD Sahel programme (Mali and Niger) to Burundi and Uganda; both countries have been successfully implementing ISSD programmes.

ISSD Africa is able to bring together a growing network of seed sector practitioners. The growing partnerships around the ISSD Africa topics, interest and participation in the ISSD Africa mid-term conference, and e.g. number of website visits shows that the CoP has been able to attract the interest of a high number of seed sector practitioners. This increases outreach and impact of the action learning projects.

Embedding of the CoP in Africa needs to be improved. COVID-19 forced ISSD Africa to adapt its work at the level of individual action learning projects as well as the CoP in general. The envisaged partnership with Tegemeo and AfricaSeeds in CoP management and facilitation has not materialized. A next phase of ISSD Africa needs rethinking on how to strengthen the embedding in Africa.

The ISSD approach remains relevant. ISSD recognizes and embraces the diversity of seed systems providing farmers access to quality seed of improved, farmer preferred and locally adapted crop varieties. The ISSD approach remains valid, especially in the context of challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, conflict and other shocks and stresses that affect farmers' access to quality seed.

Great interest to continue ISSD Africa. The ISSD Africa CoP provides a unique space for a diverse range of seed sector stakeholders to meet. Their perspectives may differ, but they are united by the common goal of improving farmers' access to and use of quality seed. CoP members, including the topic leads and teams would like to continue the ISSD Africa CoP beyond the closing of this phase in February 2023. This needs evaluation of the CoP's structure and performance in the current phase.

CoP Experience Survey – June 2022

To guide us in the design of a future phase of ISSD Africa, the coordination unit conducted a short experience survey of the CoP. The purpose of the survey was to assess how CoP members experience the activities, outputs and modes of engagement in ISSD Africa. Further, we wanted to know how they perceived their own position in and relationship to the CoP.

The survey was mailed via newsletter to the entire mailing list of ~750 members. Despite numerous reminders, the survey only received 30 responses. Regrettably, this is a common occurrence and poses challenges in what lessons we can actually take from the responses.

That said, the responses in many cases do confirm perceptions of the coordination unit:

- *Convenor:* Respondents confirm that they see ISSD Africa as fulfilling an important role of facilitating knowledge development and exchange on African seed sector development. In comments, respondents recognise the goal for cross-country learning, integrated sector collaboration and a shared focus on improving livelihoods for African communities.
- *Quality knowledge:* Respondents confirm that they value the information they receive through ISSD Africa. The website and newsletter content are well-received and the webinars/events are highly valued in particular. A first point of improvement is that respondents don't feel they have the ability to contribute content to the newsletter and/or website. More awareness, encouragement and support to CoP members is needed so they see the opportunities to share their insights. Secondly, respondents indicate a desire for more frequent, potentially monthly, bulletins. This is a common thread in the responses with a clear demand for more energy/resources to enable more active CoP communication.
- *Connections:* Respondents feel part of ISSD Africa. Respondents do not feel that ISSD Africa has helped extend their national networks. Doing so is not a core objective of ISSD Africa; more attention goes to international linkages. Nevertheless, without COVID-19, more national level events would likely have boosted this connection. Internationally, respondents note that ISSD Africa has helped to connect them well to new contacts and knowledge.
- *Focus areas:* In terms of activities, respondents want more events, webinars and workshops and research. Most noticeable is a wish for learning opportunities; training and courses. Some respondents propose activities beyond the ambition of ISSD Africa; preserving seed, working with farmers, developing new varieties, etc. In terms of topics, there is a clear priority on farmer (informal) seed systems.

In conclusion, the survey was useful to reaffirm the value of the current CoP approach; partners like to be updated on interesting activities and enjoy being connected, even if that is only online. The survey reinforces the need for more pro-active sourcing of news, knowledge and opportunities to share to the CoP.

Future of ISSD Africa: reflections from topic teams and coordination unit

The topic teams (see Annex 2-9) as well as coordination unit reflected on the future of ISSD Africa. Find some ideas below.

- Build a new phase of ISSD Africa on what has been delivered to date
- Consider opportunities for follow up work in the context of current topics for continued action research, documentation and learning on what is and is not working for seed sector transformation
- Strengthen collaboration among ISSD Africa topics/action learning projects
- Increase investment in action research to continue building an evidence base for plural seed system development
- Invest in tailoring and scaling of innovations as tested through the current action research to other geographies
- Bring approaches and guidelines as developed in the current phase to the attention of policy makers

-
- Encourage use of tools and approaches developed in the current phase in the design of new seed projects and programmes
 - Facilitate South-South sharing and learning at regional level through 'Seed Hubs'
 - Keep and further extend linkages between ISSD Africa activities and national ISSD programmes, as well as other national and Africa-wide programmes such as the new OneCGIAR initiatives working on seeds (Seed Equal, Market Intelligence, Nature+ Agriculture)
 - Develop a structure that is more resident in Africa and fully supported by stakeholders active in the seed sector on the continent
 - Strengthen linkages with AUC, regional economic communities, and sub-regional research organizations
 - Continue to leverage ISSD Africa convening power to provide a continent-wide platform for a diversity of stakeholders to share and discuss different perspectives on seed sector development
 - Increase communication through a diversity of media channels for increased impact
 - Further strengthen the ISSD Africa 'brand' through high quality content and meetings and develop a strategy on how to do so
 - Maintain the CoP momentum, whether or not future funding materializes
 - Explore different scenarios for continuation of ISSD Africa with both limited funding for bringing CoP members together, and more extended funding including sponsoring of action learning activities

Next steps

Key in the design of a next phase of ISSD Africa are the outcomes of the ISSD Africa concluding conference. The topic of the conference is "Emerging insights and perspectives advancing the transformation of Africa's Seed Sector". We aim for the conference to provide stakeholders with options for policy, practice, and research for contributing to seed sector transformation. We want to develop perspectives aiming to inspire current and future efforts to transform the seed sector to achieve five ambitions in the fields of food security and nutrition, equity and inclusion, competitiveness, climate change adaptation and resilience to shocks and stresses.

Annexes

- Annex 1: [Results Framework](#)
- Annex 2: [Seed Sector in Fragile States](#)
- Annex 3: [Seed Insecurity Response](#)
- Annex 4: [Agrobiodiversity, Seeds and Climate Change](#)
- Annex 5: [Enabling Seed Policies](#)
- Annex 6: [Enhancing Seed Quality Assurance](#)
- Annex 7: [Business Models for Early Generation Seed](#)
- Annex 8: [Creating Demand for Quality Seed](#)
- Annex 9: [Gender and Seed Systems](#)
- Annex 10: [Abbreviations and Acronyms](#)



Wageningen Centre for Development
Innovation
Wageningen University & Research
P.O. Box 88
6700 AB Wageningen
The Netherlands
T +31 (0)317 48 68 00
wur.eu/cdi

Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation supports value creation by strengthening capacities for sustainable development. As the international expertise and capacity building institute of Wageningen University & Research we bring knowledge into action, with the aim to explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life. With approximately 30 locations, 7,200 members (6,400 fte) of staff and 13,200 students, Wageningen University & Research is a world leader in its domain. An integral way of working, and cooperation between the exact sciences and the technological and social disciplines are key to its approach.

Report WCDI-22-236



