

Strengthening research capacity for agricultural development in post-conflict and protracted crisis countries in africa: A FARA perspective

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Abstract

Conflicts or crises are prevalent in a number of African countries and invariably cause disruption of economic and livelihood support systems. The agricultural sector, a major contributor to economies of these countries, is often the most affected in scenarios of conflicts and requires immediate attention due to its important role in the embryonic development of countries emerging from conflict or those undergoing protracted crisis. The Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) has been on the forefront in charting out the agricultural research and development agenda in post-conflict and protracted crisis (2PC) countries of Africa. Working closely with key African and international partners, FARA has strengthened agricultural research capacity in a number of post-conflict countries in sub-Saharan Africa and facilitated global advocacy engagements towards an agenda for action on 2PC countries. Examples of such countries include Rwanda, Burundi and Congo Brazzaville where FARA in partnership with sub-regional agencies in Eastern Africa (particularly RUFORUM and ASARECA) has made significant contribution to strengthening requisite capacity to drive the agricultural development agenda. These efforts represent a significant contribution to the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP).

Key words: African countries, agriculture, CAADP, capacity, conflicts, crisis

Résumé

Les conflits ou les crises sont fréquents dans un certain nombre de pays africains et invariablement provoquent la perturbation des systèmes de soutien économique et de moyens d'existence. Le secteur agricole, un contributeur majeur à l'économie de ces pays, est souvent la plus touchée dans les scénarios de conflits et nécessite une attention immédiate en raison de son rôle important dans le développement embryonnaire des pays sortant d'un conflit ou ceux qui subissent des crises prolongées. Le Forum pour la Recherche Agricole en Afrique (FARA) a été à la pointe pour réaliser le programme de la recherche agricole et le développement dans les pays post-conflit et de crise prolongée (2PC) de l'Afrique. En travaillant en étroite collaboration avec les partenaires africains et internationaux, le FARA a renforcé la capacité de la recherche agricole dans un certain nombre de pays post-conflit en Afrique sub-saharienne et a facilité les engagements mondiaux de plaidoyer vers un programme d'action sur les pays 2PC. Des exemples de ces pays sont: le Rwanda, le

Burundi et le Congo Brazzaville où FARA, en partenariat avec les organismes sous-régionaux en Afrique de l'Est (en particulier le RUFORUM et l'ASARECA) a apporté une contribution importante au renforcement de la capacité nécessaire pour faire avancer le programme de développement agricole. Ces efforts représentent une contribution importante du programme global africain de développement agricole (PDDAA).

Mots clés: les pays africains, l'agriculture, PDDAA, la capacité, les conflits, la crise

Background

Post-independent sub-Saharan Africa has been a rather conflict-prone terrain. Many countries (e.g. Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Congo Brazzaville, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Mozambique, Nigeria, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Madagascar, South Sudan, Eritrea, and Uganda) in this region have experienced the devastating setbacks of politically instigated internal conflicts. Significant attrition of human capital (i.e. qualified professionals in policy, tertiary education and training, research, and extension agencies) may result from such conflicts due to demise, displacement or emigration. Systemic incapacity characterized by dysfunctional organizational structures, infrastructural damage, and weakened institutional linkages is often collateral to violent conflicts and protracted crises and may pervade all economic sectors including agriculture. In these scenarios, the global community and local political leadership have continuously strived to restore a state of normalcy. Where these peace-building efforts have yielded desired results, the new challenges have been in designing effective strategies to transit from relief responses to development programming in post-conflict situations.

Post-conflict countries are those in which hostilities have practically ceased and contending actors are willfully engaged in efforts to achieve sustainable peace. For many post-conflict countries in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere, the economies are largely dependent on agriculture and investment in agricultural development is the best bet for stimulating aggregate gross domestic product (GDP) growth. The role of agriculture in the embryonic development of countries emerging from conflict rests on the fact that, on average, GDP growth originating in the agricultural sector is considered at least twice as effective in reducing poverty as GDP growth originating from other sectors. Thus, African leaders have adopted the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) framework to revitalize the role of agriculture as the engine for overall economic growth and poverty reduction in African countries. The CAADP framework embraces capacity building and research as key elements.

Capacity strengthening actions in post-conflict countries

Research is essential to growth and development in the agricultural sector due to its high rates of return (DFID, 2005; Hurley *et al.*, 2014). As lead agency in the implementation of CAADP Pillar 4 that focused on agricultural research, technology generation and adoption, FARA has been involved in strengthening agricultural research capacity in post-conflict countries. Under the Strengthening Capacity for Agricultural Research and Development in

Africa (SCARDA) program, FARA sponsored MSc training of junior researchers and refresher training of senior researchers from four post-conflict countries namely: Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, and Congo Brazzaville (FARA, 2010). The MSc trainings focused on identified areas of capacity deficits in the targeted focal institutes such as plant and animal breeding, natural resource management, agricultural extension, soil science, integrated pest management and post-harvest systems (provide reference – there must be a source that documented the identified areas for capacity deficits?).

In Rwanda, for example, nine SCARDA-sponsored researchers have graduated in various fields and are actively transforming Rwanda’s agriculture in various postings across the country (Fig. 1).

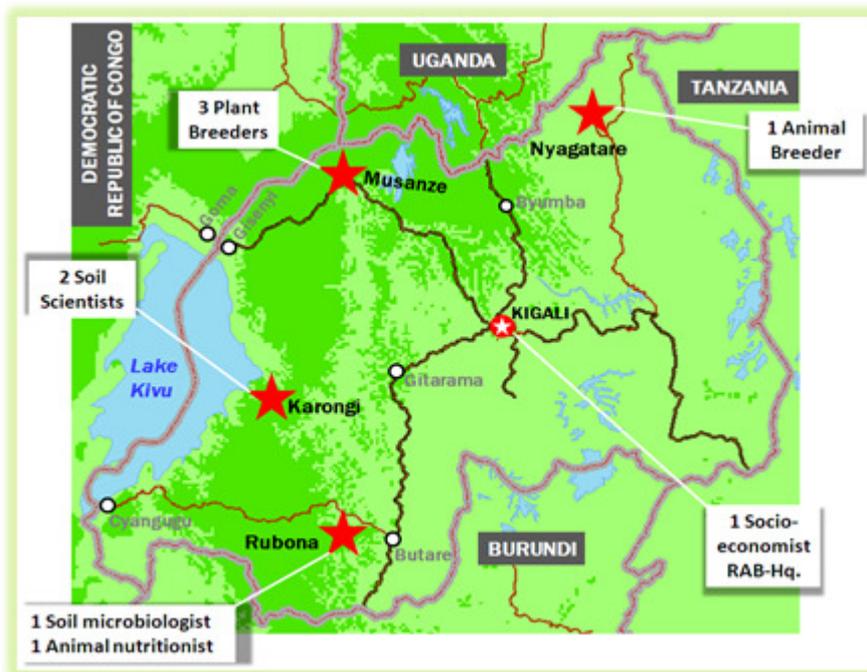


Figure 1. Spatial deployment of SCARDA graduates in Rwandan agricultural sector.

In 2012, FARA commissioned a capacity strengthening needs assessment of the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI), the report of which instigated strategic re-orientation of SLARI towards a value chain approach to research programming (Kilewe and Kirigwa, 2012). In Eastern & Central Africa, the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) also commissioned a similar assessment targeting six countries: Madagascar, Rwanda, Burundi, DRC, South Sudan, and Eritrea. The findings of the ASARECA study revealed **critical capacity gaps** and underscored the need for sub-regional capacity pooling and scholar mobility arrangements in support of fledgling research systems in post-conflict countries. The key critical capacity gaps identified include severe deficiencies in numbers and qualification of staff, general lack of linkages and collaboration between the universities and national agricultural research institutes (NARIs), and lack of graduate programs in the universities. Designing activities to

address these gap areas will require involvement of multi-stakeholders. Specifically, the study revealed that **capacity strengthening activities** in these countries should focus on: implementing a comprehensive programme for upgrading scientists and technicians; strengthening linkages between weak and stronger research systems; skills and knowledge enhancement of the existing staff; advocacy for policies and resources; and strengthening linkages between research institutes and universities (Methu and Akishule, 2013).

Advocacy on post-conflict countries

As shown in Figure 2, FARA has been collaborating with the Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR) over the last three years to highlight the peculiar circumstances obtaining in post-conflict and protracted crisis (2PC) countries and identify the agricultural research capacity strengthening needs in these countries.

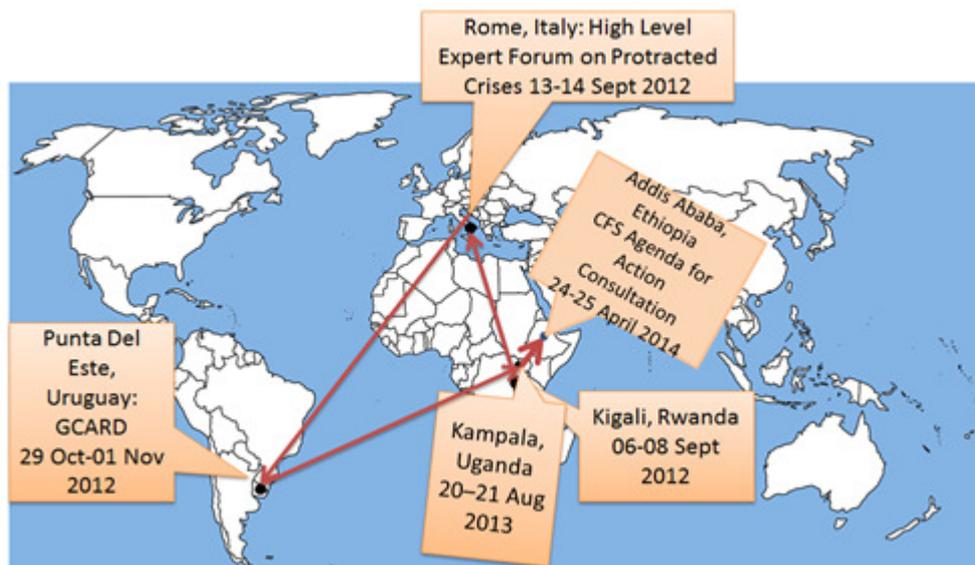


Figure 2. Global engagements on post-conflict and protracted crisis countries.

In early September 2012, a global consultative workshop was held in Kigali, Rwanda, to define key issues on capacity strengthening for agricultural innovation in post-conflict and protracted crises countries. Over 40 participants from 12 African countries and two Asian countries were in attendance. The workshop outlined a plan of action to address identified issues in the short-, medium-, and long-term horizons.

The key issues identified for action included: establishment of a consultative platform for global cooperation between 2PC countries, needs assessment for identifying priorities for concerted actions, inventory of physical resource endowments of 2PC countries, establishment of policy frameworks for capacity development, regional integration of agricultural innovation strategies, value chain development strategy and market access in 2PC countries, development of skilled human resources, and developing private sector agro-dealership systems (van Poelje and Ojjo, 2012).

The participants underscored their individual and possibly institutional commitments to the plan of action. This collaborative effort was dubbed “**the Kigali Movement**” and was conceived as a formidable advocacy platform to keep the agricultural rehabilitation of post-conflict and protracted crisis countries on the agenda at high-level forums. Subsequently, the outcome of the Kigali workshop was presented as a GFAR synthesis paper to the High Level Expert Forum on Protracted Crises held in Rome, Italy, in late September 2012. Moreover, in November 2012, the GCARD 2 meeting in Punta del Este, Uruguay, provided another opportunity for high-level engagement on the Kigali outcomes.

In 2013, a workshop on “Building agricultural capacity in post-conflict countries: case studies from South Sudan and Sub-Saharan Africa” was held in Kampala, Uganda, under the auspices of the Innovation for Agricultural Training and Education (InnovATE) program coordinated by the Virginia Polytechnic and State University, USA. The workshop came forth with recommendations on specific aspects of agricultural capacity strengthening in post conflict countries.

Agenda for action on protracted crisis countries

Building on the Kigali Movement, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) embarked on developing an agenda for action to address food insecurity in post-conflict and protracted crisis countries. At the 6th Africa Agriculture Science Week held in Accra, Ghana, in July 2013, FARA, GFAR and CFS co-hosted a side meeting to raise awareness of the consultative process around the CFS initiative. The meeting came forth with four key recommendations and a three-year plan of action to address the recommendations. So far the draft Agenda for Action document has since been drafted and circulated for review and comments by stakeholders. In early 2014, the CFS held a global consultative meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 24 – 25 April 2014 to discuss the Zero Draft of the Agenda for Action for Addressing Food Insecurity in Protracted Crises (CFS-A4A). The CFS-A4A seeks to contribute to improving the food security and nutrition of populations at risk of, and affected by, protracted crisis situations by encouraging high-level political commitment by all stakeholders to:

- (i) Address the underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition, build resilient livelihoods and food systems and meet immediate needs in protracted crisis situations;
- (ii) Transform policies, actions, investments and institutional arrangements based on evidenced-based policy guidance, illustrative examples and case studies.

Conclusion

As an advocacy document, the CFS-A4A will greatly facilitate global action on 2PC countries. There is need for joint resource mobilization to implement the action areas and strategies identified in the consultative engagements on 2PC, especially in regard to strengthening capacities for agricultural innovation in these countries.

Acknowledgement

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