

Research Application Summary

**Breaking barriers: Francophone and Anglophone institutions partnership in training future leaders in west and central Africa - lesson learnt from implementation of AGRA PhD programme, University of Ghana**

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**Abstract**

The problem of lack of trained human capacity for evidence-informing policy analysis and advocacy to translate policies into action to ensure agricultural growth and food security for smallholder farmers in Francophone countries; the need to foster research collaboration among researchers in Francophone and Anglophone West and Central Africa; the need to build leaders for tomorrow who will be able to work with French and English, as well as train and retain high level researchers within the sub-region, led Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) to contact Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and International development Research Centre (IDRC) for a grant for training MSc and PhD students in Applied Agricultural Economics and Policy from Francophone and Anglophone West and Central Africa. One hundred and twenty (120) Masters' students were trained at the "Nouveau Programme de Troisième Cycle Interuniversitaire" (NPTCI) in University of Ouagadougou 2 in Burkina Faso and twenty (20) PhD students trained at the University of Ghana. The University of Ghana's "PhD Program" started in September 2012 and ended in December 2017. The last cohort of PhD students graduated in July 2018. The program encompassed six (6) months immersion in intensive English training, internship with policy think-tanks and University of Ghana approved home-country based supervisors. The program targeted 20 students (80% Francophone and 20% Anglophone). In total, 19 students, i.e., fifteen (15) males and four (4) females enrolled. The main Francophone countries were Benin (7), Burkina Faso (5), Togo (1) and Cameroon (2). The two main Anglophone countries were Nigeria (1) and Ghana (3). The first intake of 8 francophone students joined the program in January 2013. Seven (7) students successfully defended their PhD theses in December 2016 and graduated in July 2017. The second cohort graduated in July 2018. The first batch of graduates trained are back to their respective countries and are working in Africa and this is a key message that graduates trained in the sub-region will stay and work in the sub-region. The AGRA PhD Programme has also enhanced teaching and research collaboration between Anglophone/francophone scientists in the sub-region. A major challenge, however, is the need to enhance women recruitment for PhD studies within the sub-region.

**Key words:** AGRA, Anglophone, Applied Agricultural Economics, Francophone, PhD training, Policy, Sub-Saharan Africa

## Résumé

Le problème du manque de capacités humaines pour l'analyse des politiques factuelles et leur traduction en actions pour assurer la croissance agricole et la sécurité alimentaire des petits exploitants agricoles dans les pays francophones; la nécessité de favoriser une collaboration de recherche entre chercheurs en Afrique occidentale et centrale francophone et anglophone; la nécessité de former des leaders du futur, capables de travailler en français comme en anglais, ainsi que de former et de retenir des chercheurs de haut niveau dans la sous-région, a amené l'Alliance pour une révolution verte en Afrique (AGRA) à contacter la Fondation Bill et Melinda Gates (BMGF) et le Centre de recherche pour le développement international (CRDI) pour une subvention en faveur d'une formation d'étudiants au deuxième et troisième cycles en économie et politique agricoles appliquées de l'Afrique occidentale et centrale francophone et anglophone. Cent vingt (120) étudiants de Master ont été formés au «Nouveau Programme de Troisième Cycle Interuniversitaire» (NPTCI) de l'Université de Ouagadougou 2 au Burkina Faso et vingt (20) doctorants formés à l'Université du Ghana. Le programme de doctorat de l'Université du Ghana a débuté en septembre 2012 et s'est terminé en décembre 2017. La dernière cohorte de doctorants a obtenu leur diplôme en juillet 2018. Le programme comprenait six (6) mois d'immersion dans une formation intensive en anglais, un stage avec des groupes de réflexion politiques avec l'approbation de l'Université du Ghana d'avoir des superviseurs basés dans le pays d'origine. Le programme ciblait 20 étudiants (80% francophones et 20% anglophones). Au total, 19 étudiants, soit quinze (15) garçons et quatre (4) filles étaient inscrits. Les principaux pays francophones étaient le Bénin (7), le Burkina Faso (5), le Togo (1) et le Cameroun (2). Les deux principaux pays anglophones étaient le Nigéria (1) et le Ghana (3). La première promotion de 8 étudiants francophones a rejoint le programme en Janvier 2013. Sept (7) étudiants ont soutenu avec succès leur thèse de doctorat en décembre 2016 et ont obtenu leur diplôme en juillet 2017. La deuxième cohorte a obtenu leur diplôme en juillet 2018. Le premier groupe de diplômés formés fut de retour dans leurs pays respectifs et travaille en Afrique ; ceci est un message clé que les diplômés formés dans la sous-région resteront et travailleront dans la sous-région. Le programme de doctorat de l'AGRA a également amélioré la collaboration d'enseignement et de recherche entre les scientifiques anglophones / francophones de la sous-région. Un défi majeur, cependant, est la nécessité d'améliorer le recrutement des femmes pour des études de doctorat dans la sous-région.

**Mots clés:** AGRA, anglophone, économie agricole appliquée, francophone, formation doctorale, politique, Afrique subsaharienne

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## Introduction

A major problem to solve in sub-Saharan Africa, more particularly in the francophone countries, is lack of human capacity for evidence-informing policy analysis and advocacy, and the capacity to translate policies into action to ensure agricultural growth and food security for smallholder farmers (Babu *et al.*, 2008). The first step to solving the problem was that Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) approached Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and International Development Research Centre (IDRC) for a grant for training francophone MSc and PhD students in Applied Agricultural Economics and Policy. The University of Ghana's "PhD Program" in Applied Agricultural Economics

and Policy started on September 1, 2012 and ended in August 31, 2017. The University of Ghana was targeted for the training in the sub-region for several reasons with the objective of enhancing talent retention within the sub-region (Mukanga *et al.*, 2010; Beintema and Stads, 2004). The first reason is that the University of Ghana is a leading university in the sub-region and it is able to provide francophone students access to scientific literature and participation in the definition of the global agenda while at the same time improving francophone students' skills to communicate in English. Also, the University of Ghana has a mission to build leaders for tomorrow who will be able to work in French and English, and this would enable them interact with their colleagues in the ECOWAS region.

### **Approach and Methods**

The PhD program in Applied Agricultural Economics and Policy at the University of Ghana's Department for Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, School of Agriculture, targeted 20 students with 80% of them coming from the Francophone countries and the rest of the 20% from Anglophone countries of west and central Africa. The first intake (Cohort 1) commenced studies in January 2013 and consisted of eight (8) Francophone students. The second intake (Cohort 2) started in August 2013 and was made up of two (2) Anglophone students. The third intake (Cohort 3) commenced in January 2014 and had seven (7) Francophone students and one (1) Anglophone student and the last intake (Cohort 4) commenced in August 2014 and had only one (1) Anglophone student. The PhD Program started in September 2012 and ended in December 2017. The last cohort of PhD students graduated in July 2018. The program encompassed six (6) months immersion in intensive English training, one-year intensive course work with a comprehensive examination, six (6) months internship with policy think-tanks and University of Ghana approved home-country (francophone) based supervisors working with University of Ghana supervisors; these supervisors guided home country data collection which helped foster inclusiveness in the partnership in training.

In this paper, we provide a qualitative overview of the outcome of the PhD program at the University of Ghana so as to provide information for evaluation and to share lessons learnt to improve graduate agricultural training engagement in West Africa.

### **Results and Discussion**

The total number of the PhD intake was nineteen (19) students constituting of fifteen (15) males and four (4) females. The main Francophone countries were Benin, Burkina Faso, Togo and Cameroon. Students from Benin consisted of six (6) males and a female making a total of seven (7) students. Burkina Faso provided five (5) males. There was only one male student from Togo. There was also one male student and one female student from Cameroon. Nigeria and Ghana were the two main Anglophone countries. There were two male students and a female student from Ghana making up three (3) Ghanaian students and one (1) female student from Nigeria.

As an off-shoot of the AGRA-sponsored PhD program in Applied Agricultural Economics and Policy, two new programs were developed at the University of Ghana. These are the PhD in Agribusiness and PhD in Agricultural Administration. These programs as at July

2018 had attracted 24 Ghanaians and 1 Togolese.

In addition, an average of 35 Students from Nouveau Programme de Troisième Cycle Interuniversitaire (NPTCI), and two from University of Ouagadougou had the opportunity to visit the University of Ghana yearly for the three (3) years' period for intensive lectures in English and Agribusiness and Managerial Economics. Also, there was a 3-year Memorandum of Understanding signed with Ohio State University in the United States of America for block lecture periods, thus enhancing International Institutional Collaboration. There was also intensive intra-University of Ghana collaborations and/or supervision. The AGRA PhD Programme also enhanced teaching and research collaboration between Anglophone/francophone social scientists in the sub-region with immersions in internships with policy think-tanks and University of Ghana approved home-country based (francophone) supervisors.

### **Conclusion**

This PhD training program in Applied Agricultural Economics and Policy at the University of Ghana was unique in the sub-region. Talent retention in the sub-region with skills that can transcend both the Anglophone-francophone space has been a feature of the program. As at July 2018, Cohorts 1-3 have all successfully graduated. These cohorts of PhD francophone graduates have become a valuable alumni asset for the University of Ghana and the sub-region. Seven (7) francophone students successfully defended their PhD theses in December 2016 and graduated in July 2017. The second cohort of 12 students, nine (9) francophone and three (3) anglophone students graduated in July 2018. In addition, four (4) PhD students undertaking Agribusiness and in Agricultural Administration have graduated.

The first batch of the francophone PhD graduates trained are back to their respective countries and are working in Africa. This is a key message that graduates trained in the sub-region will stay and work in the sub-region (Mukanga *et al.*, 2010). The AGRA PhD Programme has also enhanced teaching and research collaboration between Anglophone/francophone social scientists in the sub-region. A major challenge, however, is the need to increase women recruitment for PhD studies within the sub-region.

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