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The Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) was established in April 2010 following commitments made by donor governments in 2009 at the G8 in L'Aquila and the G20 in Pittsburgh. In the aftermath of the 2007-2008 global food crisis, it became clear that for over a generation, investment in developing country agriculture had been woefully insufficient. Aid to small-scale agriculture had been steadily decreasing for decades, despite the fact that two billion people are supporting over 500 million small-scale food producers¹, and that growth in the agriculture sector is 11 times more effective at reducing poverty than growth in any other sector.²

GAFSP was established with the primary goal of helping to fill the gap in investment for small-scale food producers in developing countries, in order to improve food security and reduce poverty. The Public Sector Window (PuSW) supports medium and long-term country-led interventions to improve food security and reduce poverty for small-scale food producers. Since its launch in April 2010, eight donor countries along with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have committed \$1.4 billion, and more than 35 developing nations have received funding to implement sophisticated interventions targeting small-scale food producers. The PuSW of the fund provides support specifically for country-led efforts to raise agricultural productivity, link farmers to markets, reduce risk and vulnerability, improve non-farm rural livelihoods, and develop farmer, community and government capacity.

In order to understand if GAFSP is truly achieving its goal of reaching small-scale farmers, ActionAid undertook case studies of GAFSP PuSW projects in Malawi, Niger and Togo. In addition to understanding the model and impact of GAFSP projects, the case studies also analyze components that are critical to the success of any food security intervention, including a focus on women's empowerment, strong civil society consultation, and climate resilience. The following study provides a summary of the cases and the findings, as well as recommendations.

Malwai Case Summary

In Malawi, GAFSP has invested in a project called the Smallholder Irrigation and Value Addition Project (SIVAP) which runs from 2013-2018. Eighty-nine percent of the project's total cost (US\$44.65 million) is funded by GAFSP. The project, which is aligned with the government's agricultural investment and adaptation plans, is implemented in seven districts in the Northern, Central and Southern regions. The SIVAP's goals are to contribute to poverty reduction and ensure sustainable food security at the household and national levels by increasing crop production and diversification, including through the development of high value chains. The SIVAP is designed to benefit 11,368 farm families (of which 5,600 are female-headed) under irrigation farming, and 58,700 farm families (of which 29,300 are female-headed) under rain-fed production.³

The primary component of the project is the development of new irrigation schemes and the rehabilitation of schemes built by the Government of Malawi during previous projects, often with support from international aid agencies. Since the 2000s, irrigation management transfer policies have led to the Government of Malawi handing over the management of irrigation schemes to local Water Users Associations (WUA).⁴ These local community organizations have been established by the government for the purpose of promoting local responsibility in the management of irrigation schemes. They monitor and regulate the operation and maintenance of the irrigation and drainage systems, collect water charges, and handle water-related conflicts among their members.

¹ FAO, Smallholders and Family Farmers, 2012, p.1.

² FAO, The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2012, p.28.

³ <http://www.gafspfund.org/sites/gafspfund.org/files/Malawi%202012%20GAFSP%20Proposal%2027th%20March.pdf>

⁴ http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnade775.pdf





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ActionAid commissioned a study to look at the SIVAP implementation model and impact, interviewing sixty-three women small-scale food producers from local water users' associations and farmers' groups from the Chikwawa and Karonga districts, in order to hear directly from women how the SIVAP is addressing their needs. Government staff and representatives from farmers' and civil society organizations were also interviewed for the study.

Niger Case Summary

In Niger, GAFSP supports the Water Harnessing Project to Enhance Food Security in the Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder Regions (Projet de Mobilisation des Eaux pour le Renforcement de la Sécurité Alimentaire dans les Régions de Maradi, Tahoua et Zinder, PMERSA-MTZ). GAFSP is providing 73 percent of the financing for the \$28.9 million project, which aims to enhance food security by sustainably increasing agricultural production and productivity through surface and underground water mobilization. The project targets 213,000 direct producer partners⁵ and 460,000 indirect producer partners from the Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder regions, where almost 60 percent of the Niger population resides. The three selected regions have particularly high rates of malnutrition, poverty and food insecurity compared to the national average.

The PMERSA-MTZ started in July 2012, building on the experience of existing projects and is

⁵ The term "producer partner" here is being used in place of the term "beneficiary."

expected to end in December 2016. PMERSA-MTZ expects to improve food security through the constructions of mini-dams, weirs⁶, the re-excavation of ponds that provide water to vegetable growing areas downstream of the dams, the preservation of natural resources, protection of crops with windbreaks and hedgerows, the construction of roads, garden wells, irrigation networks and storage warehouses, and by promoting women's economic and social development.

ActionAid commissioned a study to look at the PMERSA-MTZ implementation model and impact. The study interviewed twenty-one producer partners individually (including three women) in eight villages in the Maradi and Tahoua regions, and conducted focus group discussions with 218 people from farmers' and women's groups, in order to hear how the PMERSA-MTZ is addressing their needs. Representatives from the Government of Niger in charge of the project implementation, representatives from the NGOs selected for project support, and the chairman of the Plate-Forme Paysanne du Niger (the main national-level farmers' organization in Niger) were also interviewed for the study.

Togo Case Summary

The Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) Multi-Donor Trust Fund supports the implementation of two programs in Togo – the 2011-2016 Agricultural Sector Support Project (Projet d'Appui au Secteur Agricole, PASA) and the 2011-2016 Togo Agricultural Development Support Project (Projet d'Appui au Développement Agricole au Togo, PADAT). The PASA and the PADAT, together with the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (Programme de Productivité Agricole en Afrique de l'Ouest, PPAAO), are the main components of Togo's national agriculture and food security investment.

The PASA aims to rehabilitate and reinforce the productive capacity of targeted producer partners in selected agricultural and livestock sectors, and to encourage an enabling environment for agricultural development in Togo, with a combination of short-term emergency interventions for the livestock sub-sector and long-term interventions for agriculture. The GAFSP accounts for \$19 million (35 percent) of the project's total cost of \$53.9 million. The PASA targets approximately 60,000

⁶ Water-spreading weirs are dams built across a temporary river to manage the flow of rivers created by rainfall, and force the water to spread across the largest surface of land as possible. Weirs increase the surface of land that can be cultivated in flood-recession agriculture or off-season agriculture after the rainy season.

PHOTO: RUTH MCDOWALL/SHOOT THE EARTH/ACTIONAID



farmers, 13,000 livestock raisers, 1,600 fisherfolk and 500 fish traders as direct partners⁷ in the five regions of Togo. Up to 40 percent of the partners are youth or women. In addition, 650,000 households are expected to benefit from large-scale livestock vaccination campaigns.

ActionAid commissioned a study to examine the PASA implementation model and impact. The study was conducted around Nangbéto, where the construction of the Nangbéto dam for power production on River Mono led to the creation of Lake Nangbéto. The lake is located around 160 kilometers north of Togo's capital Lomé, and is surrounded by small-scale fisherfolk communities. Inland freshwater fish production accounts for about fifteen percent of the 28,000 tons of fish captured in Togo in 2010.

The study interviewed sixteen fisherfolk, fish processors and fish traders (including seven women) individually, and conducted focus group discussions with 172 people from four of the five fisherfolk committees – consisting of one fish trader cooperative and two fish processor cooperatives around Lake Nangbéto – in order to hear directly from female and male partners about how the PASA is addressing their needs. One FAO staffer, six Togo government staffers, the Mayor of Atakpamé and one PASA staffer, were also interviewed for the study, as well as a representative from the Togolese farmers' organization Coordination Togolaise des Organisations Paysannes (CTOP).

1. Do the GAFSP Public Sector Window investments successfully reach small-scale food producers?

In the three cases examined by ActionAid USA in Togo (Nangbéto Lake), Malawi (Chikwawa and Karonga districts) and Niger (Maradi region), the project documents and discussions in the field show that **small-scale food producers are not only targeted, but also reached by the projects**. Beyond the focus of the projects, the specific activities implemented and the technical choices made, show a clear focus on small-scale food production. For example, the water collection and irrigation systems promoted through the SIVAP in Malawi and the PMERSA-MTZ in Niger both correspond to low input and easy maintenance options that support small-scale food producers' assets and constraints. In the case of Malawi and Niger, testimonies and field research indicated that the projects benefit small-scale food producers in terms of income, climate resilience, and possibly food security. In the case of Togo, the fish traders and processors saw great economic benefit from the project, while the fisherfolk saw little economic benefit, and the equipment provided to fish fryers made them potentially less economically efficient.

In general, the projects appear to benefit small-scale food producers however, a more detailed examination of the PASA activities targeting the cotton, coffee and cocoa sector is needed. **It is also recommended that more information and data be collected and published by the projects on the profile of their producer partners in terms of gender, access to land and other production resources, food security and income.**

2. Are the GAFSP Public Sector Window investments inclusive of women?

In general, in spite of some attempts to identify the specific constraints and challenges women food producers face in the project documents, there is no strong and explicit priority targeting of women small-scale food producers in the GAFSP-supported projects or plans. This lack of focus meant that the deep structural and cultural challenges that lead the exclusion of women food producers primarily from organizational leadership went – for the most part – unaddressed. It is therefore **recommended that projects build up specific strategies to address women's equal right to access land, water, farming inputs, extension services and finance, as a basis for agricultural development and increasing food security.**

In the project design phase and especially in the implementation phase, there is **a lack of specific strategies to reach women for discussions related to the identification of needs or the planning of activities**. Project teams sometimes rely on discussions with management committees and representatives of the communities, where women are poorly represented or totally absent.

⁷ "Partner" and "producer partner" are the terms we are using in place of the more traditional concept of "beneficiary."



This means that **women end up getting less information about the project, because they are under-represented in the committees and groups that are consulted.** The risk is also that the women's needs, inputs and feedback are not heard. **The projects in Niger and Malawi try to address this issue by encouraging women to participate in management committees** so they have a say in the discussions and decisions that concern the whole community however, women's access to leadership and power is a long-term challenge that one project alone will probably not be able to address.

In Malawi, for example, producer partners explained during a focus group discussion that women, who often account for the majority of members, would not vote for a woman to lead their water user association, because they would not like to be led by a woman and because a woman would not be in a position to talk in public in front of men. Given the strong constraints of representation, beliefs and community self-censorship that prevent women from getting equal access to leadership, it is likely that women will not be properly reached by important project planning and implementation discussions if these consultations only take place with the existing management committees. **The projects, therefore, need to consider consulting with women separately to ensure they get adequate information on the project and can provide feedback.**

When the GAFSP-supported projects create gender-specific activities, it is related to women-focused income generating activities, such as the agro-processing equipment in Niger or fish smoking, frying and trading in Togo. In both cases, the support to economic activities includes capacity building and training for the strengthening of the existing women's groups. The failure – as was the case in Niger in general, or in Togo for the fish fryers – or success – such as in Togo for the fish smokers and traders – of the activities, is related to the quality and appropriateness of the equipment provided. This is a challenge facing too many development projects, regardless of whether they are targeting men or women. This non-gender specific issue can, however, be seen as the



consequence – as confirmed by the study in the case of the female fish fryers in Togo – of the failure to include women’s voices and women’s needs in consultation processes, and to shape material support accordingly. It therefore seems that **some of the GAFSP projects use appropriate strategies to support women’s empowerment, by supporting income generating activities to increase the income and the working conditions of women, and strengthening the women’s groups as organizations.** The challenge remains in the project design and planning of activities. The project teams have failed to adequately **consult women, identify their needs and analyze the opportunities, and the technical and financial feasibility of the actions considered before material support is provided.**

For non-gender specific activities such as trainings, cash for work activities, building or rehabilitation of irrigation or water collection systems to develop agricultural lands in Malawi, there are more women than men in the Water Users Associations supported by the project, and a majority of the individuals that are undertaking the SIVAP activities are women. In Niger, less than thirty percent of the members of the management committees set up for weir and mini-dam building, cereal banks, input shops and animal feed shops, are women. However, some women participated in activities where women’s participation was not expected in high numbers, such as weir rehabilitation-related infrastructure building or ruminant livestock raising. It therefore seems that **the agriculture and irrigation activities successfully reach women in Malawi, and partially in Niger.**

The projects have been able to set targets for women’s participation in the activities planned (40 per cent of female partners in Togo and 30 per cent in Malawi; at least 50 per cent of women in farmer, nutrition, HIV/AIDS or malaria trainings in Malawi; women’s cooperatives to account for 50 per cent of the cooperatives supported in Niger), and to ensure that women are part of management committees, be it with the statement that a majority of women take part in water user associations as in Malawi, or through a specific target of at least 25 percent female membership in relevant management groups. **However, none of the projects have gone as far as determining a target for women’s presence in decision-making roles in the groups and committees that the project activities rely on (water user associations, cooperatives, food producers’ groups, management committees).**

While field investigations have provided testimonies from women on how they benefit – or do not benefit – from the projects, it is **recommended that the projects collect and publish sex-disaggregated data on women’s and men’s food security status, income, assets and access to resources as part of their planning, monitoring and evaluation effort.**

3. Do the GAFSP Public Sector Window investments engage civil society in meaningful consultation?

Engagement with producer organizations and civil society organizations is one of the selection criteria for successful GAFSP projects, and the study has shown that the projects implemented in Togo, Niger and Malawi differ from typical agricultural development projects in their engagement of civil society organizations and producer organizations. In all three projects, consultation has gone beyond

mobilizing organizations as implementers for the project in the field. It appears that **consultation workshops involving national-level federations of farmer organizations and civil society organizations in general, were organized during the design phase of the projects,** a process recognized by the organizations themselves. **However, the national civil society organizations (CSOs) and federation of farmer organizations have been much less involved in the project implementation,** as the decentralized government services took charge of conducting activities in the field and linked directly with the representatives of community-level organizations (cooperatives, water user associations, local food producers’ groups).

Based on the three country studies, it is recommended that national-level umbrella organizations be more involved in the national steering committees, and the monitoring and evaluation processes and visits organized by the projects, so they can better grasp the implementation issues and be in a position to influence them. Such a partnership approach for the role of national CSOs and federations of farmer organizations within government-led projects could lead to mutual benefits for the organizations and various government services and departments mobilized at the regional or local level. The national-level farmer organization in Togo, CTOP, mentioned that it

would have liked to **be involved in the project components related to building an enabling environment for agricultural development through the development or adaptation of regulatory and legal frameworks in the country**. This national-level issue is seen as crucial for federations of farmer organizations that would like to be able to contribute to the discussions and decisions on the future of agriculture in their countries.

It would also make sense if civil society organizations and farmers' organizations could access and benefit from some of the capacity building and training efforts carried out through the projects which have, so far, mostly focused on government staff.

Togo also offers one positive example of farmer organization involvement, with **the participation of the CTOP in the national steering committee where the bids in response to the project's call for proposals are examined and selected**. The regional branch of CTOP also takes part in such steering committees at the regional level. This means that farmer organizations are aware of progress and next steps for project implementation, and can mobilize their members if they are interested or concerned by the plans. **It would also be important to include other concerned civil society organizations, such as women's organizations, environmental organizations and consumer organizations, in such discussion and decision-making bodies.**

The GAFSP projects have supported local producer and women organizations in Malawi and Togo, but less so in Niger. Farmer organizations, water user associations, and women's groups have benefited not only from production, processing and trading activities that improve their work and that of their members, but also from capacity building and training in leadership, organizational management, accounting. In Niger, the project implementation has ended up superseding local producer organizations by relying on ad hoc management committees based on traditional leadership positions such as that of village head. **A greater focus on implementing activities through farmer organizations and local women organizations, and supporting them accordingly is therefore recommended.**

4. Do the GAFSP Public Sector Window investments support climate resilience?

The increase in climate resilience and sustainable resource management are core dimensions of the projects reviewed by ActionAid in Malawi, Niger and Togo. The development of water collection and irrigation systems in Malawi and Niger aims to make small-scale food producers less dependent on rain-fed agriculture and changing weather patterns. The approach in Togo is one of sustainable natural resource management through regulations and limitations on fishing. This approach should make producer partners less vulnerable to the impacts of climate change in the long term by ensuring that their main source of income still exists despite expected demographic and climatic changes. Other actions, such as the development of cereal banks, better access roads and transportation in Niger, intend to limit post-harvest loss and income diversification. **This should make small-scale food producers and their families less vulnerable to economic shocks because they would have better means to sell, store or rely on other incomes.**

However, while the majority of small-scale food producers in Niger and Malawi rely on rain-fed agriculture, there has been a clear focus on the development of small-scale irrigation in both projects, which is only viable in a limited geographic area and for a minority of small-scale food producers. The analysis of public project documents and field work has been inconclusive as to whether this strategic direction increases the climate resilience of the food producers that are the most vulnerable to climate change. **It is therefore recommended that a mapping of climate vulnerability and risks of small-scale food producers in the various countries be conducted and used as the basis to select areas and strategic options for agricultural development support.**

The future resilience of farming communities will be challenged by the duration and the maintenance costs of the resilience-increasing technologies introduced or rehabilitated by the projects. As already seen in the case of Niger, and as may be seen in the future in Malawi, water collection and irrigation systems require maintenance (of motor-pumps, food processing equipment, canals, weirs). The fact that a significant proportion of the systems are rehabilitated and not newly built in Malawi and Niger shows that long-term maintenance of such infrastructures is a crucial issue.



For communities to be able to take up maintenance of public infrastructures by themselves they need to have the financial means, the technical knowledge, and the collective interest and organization to do so. The case of a community working together to repair a weir with sandbags in Niger shows that they had the collective dynamic and technical means to complete partial and short-term repairs, but perhaps not long-term and more costly repairs. **The projects therefore could consider supporting the establishment of community-based financial mechanisms and monitoring systems at the local level to ensure that all parties benefiting from the water management systems, built or rehabilitated, can be sustained in the long term.**

Finally, to be truly climate-resilient, agricultural production technologies promoted by the projects need to be affordable and increase the autonomy of food producers. The projects in Niger and Malawi include the promotion of hybrid cereal seeds for irrigation agriculture. It makes sense to look at new types of seed for the developed irrigated lands, because traditional cereal varieties result from centuries-old farmer-led selection work on rain-fed cereals that are more than likely not adapted to irrigation. However, free distribution of otherwise expensive hybrid seeds that usually yield more when accompanied with other expensive inputs such as nitrogen fertilizers and chemical pesticides, bears the risk of threatening both the environment and the autonomy of food producers, if they become reliant on expensive input-intensive agricultural methods. While production increases in the short term may be impressive, the long term increased resilience of small-scale food producers remains to be assessed. **It is therefore recommended that the projects monitor and assess the economic autonomy of food producers in their practices, as an integral part of climate resilience monitoring and evaluation.**



PHOTO: EVA-LOTTA JANSSON/ACTIONAID

Conclusions: How can GAFSP grow from here?

Consultations could be improved everywhere

- National-level farmers' organizations, NGOs and women as a specific group have not been consulted in most places. Consulting these groups in the design of the projects and maintaining their engagement throughout could help ensure that challenges are more easily addressed and the needs of the most vulnerable are not ignored.

More focus needs to be placed on most vulnerable

- Those without access to as many productive resources (fisherfolk in Togo, those without irrigation in Niger and Malawi) are not seeing as many improvements as producer partners with access to more productive resources and stronger markets. Projects must be as inclusive as possible to ensure that all producer partners are able to see benefits.

Building political power needs to be strengthened

- More vulnerable groups (such as fisherfolk in Togo and women in Niger and Malawi) lack political power and need more capacity building in leadership and organization. Political voice will ensure that any improvements made to the livelihoods of these groups are sustainable past the end of the project.

Communities need sensitization to women's empowerment

- Women's political and economic power is being hampered in the case of Niger and Malawi by a lack of community sensitization. Community members, leaders and sometimes even women themselves, questioned and criticized women's leadership capabilities. Without proper training and sensitization to the issue of women's empowerment and leadership these entrenched beliefs about women in leadership roles will remain.

Projects with flexibility are most successful

- Ongoing consultations that allow for adjustments and additions to project plans are best meeting needs of producer partners. Changing the types of crops grown in Malawi and adding livelihood diversification schemes to the projects in Togo are examples of course corrections that have allowed the projects to more fully address the realities of producer partners.

Most projects are seeing an improvement in livelihoods for some

- Increases in income, increased access to markets, and improved food security are being seen across all projects for at least some producer partners. With relatively small investments GAFSP is having an impact but more can be done to realize truly inclusive and sustainable development.

Most projects are making communities more climate resilient

- All three projects have seen improvements to climate resilience through protecting the fish populations in Togo and improving water management in Niger and Malawi. Again, projects will need to ensure that there are creative solutions developed in consultation with communities that balance climate resilience with livelihoods – in the case of the fisherfolk in Togo – and that the most vulnerable are also able to maintain their resilience to climate change.

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