Call to action

Cost-effective capacity building of grassroots institutions will enable communities’ focus on attaining a triple bottom line goal of increasing agriculture productivity, livelihood improvement and environmental sustainability. Training on soft skills for local level facilitators and appropriate legal frameworks will enhance integrated planning, a key element for landscape level work. Noting the cardinal position in development attached to smallholder farming systems we propose the following:

- Establish mechanisms for integration of vertical governance processes with community level activities. This will improve efficiencies and provide capacity building benchmarks and milestones
- Develop and support policy processes for the articulation of Landscape level outcomes. A systems approach to agricultural productivity enhancement, livelihoods improvements and With this in mind, we call upon the governments of SSA to commit to the following:
- Promote innovation and diffusion of tools and approaches that enhance capacities for rural institutional strengthening. A clear understanding of grassroots level institutional engagement will provide better value for money in capacity development. It will also provide a basis for evaluation of activities undertaken as well as expected outputs.

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References


The challenge

Increasing food productivity, ensuring sustainable production systems and poverty alleviation in sub Saharan Africa calls for robustly performing smallholder farmer systems. It is imperative to have capacity enhancement amongst grassroots community members to enable viable solutions for the complex technical, institutional and policy issues facing agricultural development in the region.

Research on seed and inputs systems, agricultural extension, finance and credit, rural infrastructure, market participation, managing rural non-farm diversification, trade policy and food price stabilization are aspects that require adequate support and participation of communities at the grassroots level.

Lessons generated over time have shed some light on key questions related to smallholder farmer development:

What are the capacity development strategies necessary to for wholesome grassroots community participation?

How can we ensure equitable opportunities for stakeholders while enhancing social capital among community members?

How can the classical extension services approaches be transformed to influence organizational capacities that unlock potentials in large-scale rural development?

The pathway details steps for successful strengthening of grassroots institutions within the regions of East Africa (Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya).

Executive summary

Enabling the efficient and timely benefits of development to a diverse community membership is a great challenge to governments all over the world. In developing the rural areas, enhancing agricultural production, improving natural resource management and expanding opportunities for trade has long been recognized as key to improved livelihoods. Increased spending by governments in the production and environment sectors has, however, not guaranteed success. How can sustained benefits of development be attained by a majority of the citizenry, especially those in the rural areas?

Research and development partners have stressed the need to promote a sustainable intensification of agriculture. Tackling world hunger calls for the increased food production. There is a need to double the food produced in Africa in the next 30-40 years to avoid starvation of an ever-increasing population. Capacity development is central to this prospect. It will involve the provisions of ‘social infrastructure’ for rural development to enable smallholder farmers inculcate agro-ecological techniques at the grassroots level. A successful capacity development process provides skills, technologies, partnerships, and socially and legally relevant support systems. We develop the building blocks for a social infrastructure—a pathway for linking individuals, smallholder farmers, service providers, private sector operatives, and local government agencies amongst other stakeholders. The pathway details steps for successful strengthening of grassroots institutions within a missing link for large-scale rural development.
Case study 1: Seeking for opportunities for enhancing capacity building Embu County

Embuch County is located in Eastern province of Kenya and consists of 4 constituencies. These are: Manyatta, Runyenjes, Gachoma and Sikakao. The County has a population of 516,212 and a population density of 183 people/km². 83.9% of this population lives in rural areas. There is a number of development opportunities provided under a number of projects in the county. This include the following:

- Manyatta
- Entrepreneurship clusters
- Vocational and Technical Education
- Employment
- Housing development
- Agriculture and rural development

Constituency development fund allocation trends from two constituencies showing allocation from 2005-2009


The Constituency Development Fund (CDF) in Kenya provides good lesson learning opportunity for the empowerment of rural smallholders.

Emerging lessons

As currently practiced, collective action though essential, is not sufficient to stimulate wide scale livelihood improvement amongst rural households.

There is need to characterize steps in multi-stakeholder processes, articulating support measures for simple partnerships, coalitions and platforms. Further, it is necessary to understand and develop landscape level goals. Landscape level objectives provide a forum for multi-sectoral collaboration, involvement of both local and national government agencies and the private sector.