INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE TOOLKIT

Improving country capacity to manage food security policy reform

Background

Institutional architecture refers to the multi-stakeholder and multisectoral processes, relationships, and functional structures at multiple levels (including subnational, national, regional, continental and global) to manage food security policy change. Within the context of food security, IA reflects both the capacity of specific types of organizations (such as ministries, policy think tanks, citizen interest groups and district governments), as well as the processes through which these organizations interact towards a common food security goal. Effective investments in a country or region's IA increase durable local capacity and are a building block towards self-reliance. A country's capacity to undertake transparent, inclusive, predictable, and evidence-based policy change is fundamental to improving food security outcomes. For example, a robust IA supports multisectoral coordination between and among government ministries to jointly formulate a national agriculture investment plan. Investing in strengthening a country's IA for food security policy is a USAID GFSS priority as it provides a foundation for building the systemic capacities for managing a multisectoral food security program.

Since 2013, in-depth institutional architecture (IA) assessments have been used by the USAID Bureau of Food Security, USAID Missions, local policymakers and other key stakeholders to better understand possible constraints that could stymie effective policy change in countries such as Ethiopia, Tanzania, Malawi, Ghana, Senegal, Kenya and regionally for the East African Community (EAC). The IA framework was designed to provide a scan of the capacities fundamental to policy development and implementation; and to align with the commitments and principles of the African Union's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the Paris Declaration Aid Effectiveness. In particular, country's commitment that: 1) planning and implementation should involve the inclusive participation of a wide range of stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society organizations; and 2) decision-making should be evidenced-based. CAADP was initiated by the African Union (AU) in 2002 and was designed to help countries increase agricultural productivity by at least six percent per annum and achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goal number one, which is to cut hunger in half by 2015.

More recently, repeat IA assessments in Kenya and Malawi have demonstrated that this approach can be useful as both a *process* and a *tool* to help an inclusive set of stakeholders reach a shared understanding of the current strengths and weaknesses in a country's IA, and to build consensus around a set of key priorities and actions to strengthen the reform system necessary for managing a multi-sectoral food security program. Africa Lead's experience in Kenya and Malawi also suggests that periodic reviews of IA status, involving local stakeholders, can also be a useful tool for monitoring progress over time and exerting pressure for change. Because of this learning, Africa Lead is developing a set of customizable tools and approaches based on the IA framework to facilitate a structured, consultative process for local stakeholders to reach consensus on the current IA status, prioritize key issues and develop solutions in a participatory way.

Purpose of the Toolkit

The purpose of the IA Toolkit is to provide a set of customizable and adaptable resources to help country-level stakeholders improve their institutional architecture:

1. *Convene* a set of relevant stakeholders from inside and outside of the government to own and steward the IA improvement process
1. *Assess* IA capacity and performance in a participatory and periodic manner;
2. *Build* consensus and buy-in around priority action items;
3. *Plan* capacity development interventions and technical assistance; and
4. *Monitor* results.

The IA Toolkit is divided into four stages: pre-work consultation, multi-stakeholder self-assessment, issue prioritization & action planning, and ongoing learning & follow-up.

Phase 1: Pre-Work Consultation

The purpose of the pre-work with key stakeholders, including high level government officials (as appropriate), is to set expectations and identify the most useful framing for the IA improvement process. During the pre-work consultation, the IA Team will conduct a scoping and engagement exercise in collaboration with key stakeholders to gauge demand and customize the toolkit elements according to local context and needs. Questions to be investigated include:

- Would assessing the status of IA and/or the IA planning exercise be a valuable exercise locally?
- Will government and NSAs participate and will the resulting action plan have strong potential to be implemented and have an impact?
- Is there an existing local partner, working group and/or coordination platform (i.e. a policy coordination group) that the IA Team can coordinate with?
- Is it possible to set up the work so that the results will be useful for other existing processes?
- For example, is it possible to do the workshop with timing that feeds into the Joint Sector Review (JSR) processes?
- Could the IA workshop and action planning be a helpful step feeding into consultations around the NAIP 2.0 review and work planning process?
- If there is a donor working group that meets regularly, would the IA workshop be useful as a planning tool for this group?

Decision point: If deemed useful and relevant after these questions are answered, then the IA Steering Committee can be facilitated and convened to establish proposed timelines and customize the Toolkit.

Phase 2: Multi-Stakeholder, Participatory Self-Assessment

This phase focuses on facilitating stakeholders to self-assess the effectiveness and capacity areas specific to functions for undertaking food security policy change. The tools in this module are designed to facilitate a participatory, multi-stakeholder self-assessment of a country's capacity and performance on specific areas of IA inside and outside of a workshop setting. The discussion around the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement for each IA survey question will inform the IA Action Planning during the workshop.

The tools in this module include: IA survey instrument (can be customized to be collected via small group discussions, key informant interviews, online or other approaches); various tools for using a workshop approach, including a facilitator's guide, workshop agenda and Terms of Reference for an IA Steering Committee of in-country stakeholders to plan, coordinate and own the IA workshop preparation and

outcomes; stakeholder mapping exercises; and guidance and conceptual framework for conducting an expert-led IA assessment.

Phase 3: Issue Prioritization & Action Planning

Issue prioritization and action planning is a chance to review weakness and capacity gaps -- using the constraints identified – to prioritize actions and areas for capacity building and plan for implementation in the next year. This step is expected to take a minimum of one full day in a participatory workshop and focuses on planning prioritized actions for identified weaknesses in the country's IA. The planning process will balance actions in two categories: shorter term, "low hanging fruit" which can be implemented easily to gain momentum; longer term, resource intensive priorities which will require partner commitments to implement.

The report out of the Action Plan at the end of the day should include a broad set of stakeholders: Ministries of Finance and Planning, donors, resource partners and other agricultural sector coordination mechanisms, to ensure shared ownership and commitment from a variety of stakeholders in the IA improvement process. Organizers should invite in high level decision makers to hear the Action Plan that may not have been able to participate for the full workshop. Alternatively, if high level decision makers are not able to attend, the IA Steering Committee can meet separately to present and discuss the Action Plan in small group meetings.

The tools in this module include: Action Plan template; workshop agenda and facilitator's guide; 360-degree feedback survey for a subset of stakeholders on specific IA improvement needs; benchmarking tool for performance within the policy reform system.

Phase 4: Ongoing Learning and Follow-up

Following the workshop, the next day if possible, it is recommended that facilitators debrief with key country representatives including the CAADP country team, and finalize responsibilities for the IA Action Plan, including ongoing learning and M&E. If feasible, the IA Action Plan can also be incorporated as part of the country's NAIP 2.0.

This phase will ensure that the IA Steering Committee tracks actions taken and provide reminders of self-selected deadlines. In addition, the tools in this module will track action and progress on the action plan in order to evaluation this information at the one-year convening. The main objectives of the one-year re-convening are to 1) re-assess the IA indicators, using the same 1-5 scale to gauge change since the baseline scoring one year ago; 2) to celebrate progress made with the IA Action Plan; and 3) adaptively reassess improvement priorities for the coming year.

The tools in this module include: guidance resource called, Facilitation and Coaching Support to IA Action Plans, that outlines additional support to sustain momentum in achieving milestones in the IA Action Plan, including regular check-in follow-up meetings and a one-year re-convening of participants in the IA Workshop; an online application for participants to view the action plan and report actions taken.

IA status examines six broad capacity categories:
- Predictability of the Guiding Policy Framework – the capacity and effectiveness of the legislative process and the extent to which the relevant laws, regulations, and policies governing the policy development process are transparent and predictable.

- <u>Policy Development and Coordination</u> – the capacity and effectiveness of the institutions and entities which initiate and develop food security and agriculture policy and the relationships between them.
- <u>Inclusivity and Stakeholder Consultation</u> – the capacity and effectiveness of the process of consultation with key groups critical to the food security sector and the extent to which the different groups are engaged, including across government, the private sector and among non-governmental organizations.
- <u>Evidence-based Analysis</u> – the capacity and effectiveness of the institutions, processes, and forums responsible for collecting data and the extent to which evidence is used to inform or revise policy change.
- <u>Policy Implementation</u> – the capacity and effectiveness of the organizations and institutions that have direct responsibility for policy implementation. It also includes the extent to which the mechanisms for coordination and management are functional and used.
- <u>Mutual Accountability</u> – the effectiveness of the process by which multiple partners (such as government, donors, private sector and civil society organizations) agree to be held responsible for the commitments that they have voluntarily made to each other. It relies on trust and partnership around shared agendas. Mutual accountability is supported by evidence that is collected and shared among all partners. The principle of mutual accountability is expected to stimulate and broaden the practice of benchmarking, mutual learning and harmonization of national development efforts, while encouraging a greater level of trans-boundary cooperation and regional integration.