

AFRICA LEAD II PROGRAM REVIEW

WEST AFRICA – KEY FINDINGS

Introduction and Methodology

Africa Lead's program review presents important findings and recommendations from the West Africa Regional program and its three partners in the region:

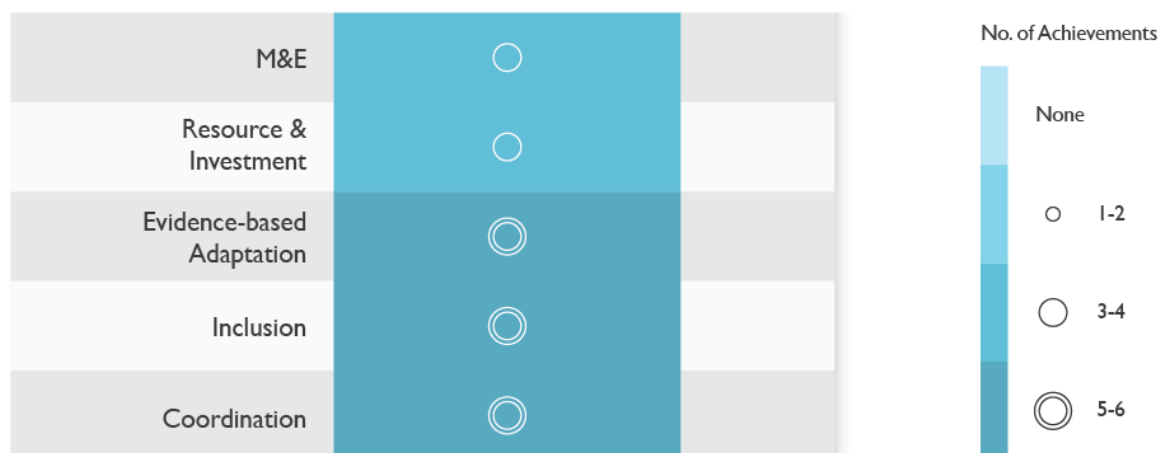
1. The Conseil Ouest et Centre Africain pour la Recherche et le Développement Agricoles/West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF/WECARD)
2. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
3. The Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS)

Fieldwork for the program review was carried out from March 30 – May 5, 2017. The program review process involved a small group discussion with CORAF/WECARD, and a key informant interview with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Examples of Significant Achievements Influenced by Africa Lead

CORAF/WECARD and ECOWAS detailed six examples of significant achievements influenced by Africa Lead. The graphic below characterizes these achievements into thematic areas of focus, counting the frequency with which each of the six themes of agricultural transformation are cited within the achievement examples. Detailed definitions as well as findings and recommendations for each of the six themes can be found in the accompanying summary booklet.

WEST AFRICA REGION



Benchmarking Performance for Agricultural Transformation (BPAT)

CORAF/WECARD, Africa Lead's key partner in the West Africa program, carried out a self-assessment and mapped their performance against five of the six agricultural transformation themes in the BPAT tool. The BPAT tool allows organizations to rate themselves a score out of 5. A score of "1" is given to an organization that is performing insufficiently in a certain area. In contrast, a score of "5" is given to organizations whose performance is in accordance with best practices at the top international level. The BPAT tool also asks partners to provide evidence and examples of change to substantiate their scores. While ECOWAS and CILSS did not participate in the BPAT self-scoring, these organizations did provide examples of change according to each of the themes. The following sections present a summary of the most significant changes presented by each partner.



Most Significant Changes

The Conseil Ouest et Centre Africain pour la Recherche et le Développement Agricoles / West and Central Africa Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF/WECARD)

CORAF/WECARD is a council with 22 member states in West and Central Africa. Its mission is to promote and enable sustainable improvements in agricultural productivity, competitiveness, and markets in West and Central Africa. Africa Lead has provided a range of targeted technical assistance to CORAF/WECARD, including support to the Board of Directors via a Board Governance Capacity Development Workshop in June 2015, and an Advanced Leadership and Team Building training in January 2016. An institutional audit was carried out in 2015 that identified key areas for strengthening CORAF/WECARD's organizational structure, financial health, and functional competencies.

Most Significant Change

- According to CORAF/WECARD, Africa Lead support was instrumental to their improved data collection and reporting systems for monitoring and evaluation (M&E). One indicator of improved success is that other organizations now turn to them for guidance on M&E.
- Prior to Africa Lead support, CORAF/WECARD had significant challenges in data collection and reporting – to the degree that it was noted in 2013 by USAID as well as British and Australian donors. CORAF/WECARD has since hired M&E specialists who provide ongoing training and coaching; and develop targets, log frames, and other M&E tools and systems for the organization. CORAF/WECARD has been working to reinforce a culture of M&E – both internally and within the NARS that it supports. In addition, CORAF/WECARD indicated that they are better able to draw on their own data to inform their evidence-based policy advocacy. CORAF/WECARD also indicated that they are better able to carry out evidence-based reporting.
- CORAF/WECARD emphasize outcomes and impacts when reporting to their national-level partners (ECOWAS/West African Economic and Monetary Union [UEMOA], the Network of Farmers and Agricultural Producers' Organisation of West Africa [ROPPA], African Seed Trade Association [AFSTA], and the NARS). The informants spoke about their work in evidence-based policy advocacy, and stated that they are using data and information from their activities on the ground to develop policy briefs that support advocacy efforts.
- CORAF/WECARD informants stated that the organization used findings from Africa Lead's 2015 institutional audit to make immediate course corrections and inform the development of its new strategic plan.
- As a result of the institutional audit, CORAF/WECARD has begun to reorganize staff to better align personnel by their competencies, develop links to consultants, and establish core and project-based teams. CORAF/WECARD is also working to bring on a Human Resources Manager.
- To address gaps in knowledge management, M&E, and communication systems, CORAF/WECARD is upgrading its hardware and software and working to consolidate databases from its regional projects and initiatives. The consolidated database will be organized by thematic area and will be linked to the ECOWAS and African Union databases.
- The institutional audit also recommended that CORAF/WECARD prioritize resource development. Findings from the audit also indicated that CORAF was not financially sustainable under its current financial system. The organization has since hired a dedicated Grants & Partnership Officer, and is developing a partnership and resource mobilization strategy.
- CORAF/WECARD's website and social media platforms have been upgraded, and are updated regularly by three Africa Lead interns who support different departments in CORAF/WECARD. For example, a communication intern supported by Africa Lead developed the first edition of the CORAF/WECARD newsletter to showcase activities and results of the institution, and was distributed to more than 3,000 people.

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

Established in 1975, ECOWAS is a 15-member regional group (members include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Cape Verde) with a mandate to promote economic integration. ECOWAS plays an important role in supporting coordination, knowledge-sharing, and regional integration in West Africa.

By providing critical facilitation support and institutional strengthening to ECOWAS, Africa Lead is helping to activate, energize, and drive regional leadership for CAADP implementation in West Africa. Africa Lead has provided logistical and technical support services to ECOWAS. In November 2015, Africa Lead coordinated with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)/Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS) to design, organize, and facilitate a West Africa Regional Joint Sector Review (JSR) as well as a review of the progress of the ECOWAS Common Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP). From May to June 2016, Africa Lead facilitated the West African Regional Agriculture Investment Policy (RAIP) Reformulation Process. In June 2015, Africa Lead also implemented a Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) approach to support climate-smart agriculture for ECOWAS member states.

Most Significant Change

- According to the ECOWAS key informant, the most significant impact of Africa Lead's support was its facilitation of the "ECOWAP+10" (the shortened name for the ten-year review of the ECOWAP held in 2015, which coincided with the Joint Sector Review for West Africa.)
- During ECOWAP+10, a diverse group of stakeholders from the public and private sectors and the international community agreed on the need to formulate second-generation National Agriculture Investment Plans (NAIPs), and a Regional Agriculture Investment Plan (RAIP).
- Africa Lead's support was critical in bringing together the necessary stakeholders to advance and improve the agricultural sector across the ECOWAS member states.
- ECOWAS also spoke about Africa Lead's contribution to the West Africa Joint Sector Review, pointing out that the Africa Lead team co-organized and contributed to the success of the continent's first regional agriculture sector JSR. Africa Lead also provided technical and logistical support to JSR preparation, and to workshops with non-state actors (NSAs) and donors that were designed to strengthen NSA involvement and engagement in the JSR mutual accountability process.
- One key informant specifically mentioned Africa Lead's support in helping the organization to produce high quality documents, and share information and knowledge through the JSR, which has in turn improved ECOWAS's performance in the development, review, and implementation of policies and procedures.

Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS)

Africa Lead supported CILSS to develop and implement an M&E platform that could feed into CILSS' intranet, and disseminate relevant information to the public via the program website. The M&E platform is supported by a software package, which is an online information system called Paradox Box. The

system has been designed to store, analyze, and disseminate CILSS research products and knowledge mapping on various thematic areas of CILSS' strategic approach: (1) food security and nutrition; (2) natural resource management and climate change adaptation; (3) water management; (4) access to markets; and (5) support to CILSS management and leadership.

Most Significant Change

- Before Africa Lead rolled out Paradox Box as CILSS' information management system, all data entry, analysis, and processing was conducted at the Executive Secretariat. As an online tool, Paradox Box links the project offices of CILSS. As a result, all activities related to data entry, analysis, and processing are performed across the three sites (Ouagadougou, Bamako, and Niamey).
- CILSS key informants reported that the M&E platform has reduced the time needed for data entry and analysis as well as inefficiencies related to bringing data from one office to the next. Based on integrated formulas and requests, the new M&E system can automatically filter data; calculate figures; design tables, charts, and graphics; and generate a dashboard with quantitative and qualitative data to prepare reports and documents.
- The system contains CILSS' 2016-2020 operational plan as well as its logical framework. It establishes linkages between activities, objectives, results, and indicators. Based on this configuration, the CILSS M&E team is able to measure achievements from activity implementation as well as progress performance indicators. According to Andre Kone, a CILSS M&E officer at INSAH in Bamako, the new system "offers real opportunities in terms of activity planning."

Key Findings from the Program Review

1. **To effectively participate in policy dialogue, Non-State Actors (NSAs) must have prepared advocacy messages backed by data from the rural level.** NSAs will be effective in the national dialogue if they have a clear advocacy program supported by analysis, and integrate data and information from local levels. CORAF/WECARD indicated that they are using M&E data from member activities in order to develop policy briefs that support advocacy efforts.
2. **Regional organizations can convene workshops to advance evidence-based policy options.** ECOWAS conducted a 10-year review of the Regional Agricultural Policy for West Africa, which informed the future strategy and investment plan for the region.
3. **By playing the role of facilitative leader, mentor, convener and Collaboration, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) partner, Africa Lead is helping to ensure beneficiaries establish the practice of collaborating to share lessons, monitor progress, and promote adaptive management. As a result, partners will have improved chances of sustainable and long-term success.** CLA proved to be an important element in Africa Lead's efforts to develop a strategy for mainstreaming climate smart

agriculture across the region. In addition, Africa Lead utilized a CLA approach to activate meaningful mutual accountability frameworks for the West Africa Regional Agricultural Investment Plan.

- 4. Africa Lead support is helping CORAF, CILSS, and ECOWAS make strides in M&E at the regional level, which will in turn inform the practice of CLA.** For example, ECOWAS held three major CLA events, including the first-ever regional JSR, the ECOWAP+10, and the climate-smart agriculture learning event. These events helped to promote evidence-based learning, and will inform future strategies and policies. CORAF was able to change the way they conduct M&E to focus on outcomes instead of outputs. CILSS has a new M&E platform that integrates all three campuses in three WA countries, and allows for real-time adjustments in their activity planning based on results achieved to date.
- 5. CORAF is effectively collaborating to focus on data collection, convening, analyzing, and sharing, which enables partner institutions to take action with policy advocacy and programming adaptation.** In the two examples provided in the program review, CORAF staff were asked to help research an issue, and subsequently provided the findings to the collaborating partner. They handed off their value chain finance research to WAEMU, and provided the demand-driven seed policy research to the Alliance for Seed Industry to help develop policies that increase farmers' access to high quality seeds.
- 6. Opportune timing and formalizing recommendations through an assessment were critical success factors that pushed CORAF to act.** The institutional audit findings were immediately useful, as CORAF was about to revise their strategic plan. As a result, they were able to use the findings to set priorities in their strategic plan and operational plan. SGD participants also noted that even though they were aware of internal gaps, they could not take action until the findings were on paper. Therefore, the documentation of internal gaps and recommendations motivated them to act.