2023 CLA CASE COMPETITION

COLLABORATE • LEARN • ADAPT

Case Title:

CLA for commercial production of Iron Rich Beans: Karamoja subregion

Name:

Aisha Zawedde, Miriam Namukose, Lydia Kutegeka.

Organization:

DAI Global, LLC

Summary:

To improve nutrition and food security in Karamoja, the Feed the Future Uganda Inclusive Agricultural Markets (FtF IAM) Activity promoted the production and consumption of iron rich beans (IRB) in the Karamoja subregion with the aim of increasing incomes and improving the livelihood of households through agriculture-led inclusive economic growth. The Activity sourced the IRB bean seed from districts outside of Karamoja because it was not available in Karamoja and there was no commercial production of seed within the subregion.

To address this challenge, FTF IAM entered external collaboration with three entities namely, the National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO), the agricultural research agency in Uganda, and Okeba, a private enterprise engaged in aggregation and off taking of grains. Okeba sourced and supplied farmers with foundation seed for planting while NARO provided technical training and coaching to farmers to improve production through better agronomic practices and post-harvest handling of IRB seed. Through collaboration, the partnership co-invested. FtF IAM organized farmer groups and introduced agro-insurance to protect farmers against risks derived from weather changes, pests, and disease outbreaks. Whereas NARO accessed foundation seed for the farmers and continued to provide technical assistance. The realized output was that 196 commercial and smallholder farmers from 6 farmer groups grew IRB seed, 479 acres were utilized, 115kg yield per acre was realized and a total of 54.92 MT of QDS seed produced in the second season. As of 2022, the Activity has reallocated resources from performance-based awards to capacity building of the groups in enterprise development so they can operate as commercially viable entities – Local Seed Businesses (LSB).

1. **WHAT: What is the general context in which the case takes place? What organizational or development challenge(s) or opportunities prompted you to collaborate, learn, and/or adapt?**

For the last six (6) years, Karamoja has registered a higher-than-average prevalence of anaemia. Karamoja's under-nutrition is linked to weather-related challenges like emergent crop production, prolonged drought, and poor infrastructure making it prone to high-risk crop failure. To improve nutrition and food security in Karamoja, the USAID Feed the Future Uganda Inclusive Agricultural Markets (FtF IAM) Activity is promoting the production and consumption of iron rich beans (IRB) in the sub-region with an aim of increasing incomes and improving the livelihood of households through agriculture-led inclusive economic growth. By growing the IRB Quality Declared Seed (QDS), the farmers organised in groups would sell quality affordable seed to fellow farmers and earn an income.
Iron Rich beans are beans that have had their iron micronutrient increased. The Activity sourced the IRB bean seed from districts outside of Karamoja because it was not available in Karamoja and there was no commercial production of seed within the subregion. Additionally, poor infrastructure, insecurity, and weak commercial relationships with agribusinesses outside the region, made farmers in Karamoja have limited access to quality inputs and agribusiness extension support services. This contributes to frequent price fluctuations of inputs and output markets for the IRB beans. Aiming to make quality affordable seed available and consequently improve the nutrition of local communities, the Activity sought to partner with organized farmer groups to produce certifiable IRB quality seed that could be made available within the sub-region.

2. **What two CLA Sub-Components are most clearly reflected in your case?**

Adaptive Management

External Collaboration

3. **HOW: What steps did you take to apply CLA approaches to address the challenge or opportunity described above?**

To promote the production of the IRB seed, FTF IAM entered into external collaboration with three entities namely the National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO), the agricultural research agency in Uganda, and Okeba, a private enterprise involved in aggregation and off taking of grains. Okeba sourced and supplied farmers with 4.77 MT of foundation seed for planting while NARO provided technical training and coaching to farmers to improve production through better agronomic practices and post-harvest handling of IRB seed.

The partners held Pause and Reflect sessions to use lessons learnt and strategically adapt to meet challenges faced during season one. The team reviewed implementation of the first season and identified what worked and what didn't work well. The team learnt that despite prior work with other development partners to build farmer capacity, transforming farmer groups into effective businesses is resource intensive, iterative, and requires an integrated approach. Secondly, producing IRB seed needs more specialized crop management and is labor intensive thus resulting in additional costs. Furthermore, the Activity did not have enough information on which varieties would perform best in the region because NARO has not yet completed research on which varieties perform best in Karamoja based on varying climates. And lastly, the Activity relied too heavily on performance incentives and did not offer enough technical support through its partnership with NARO. Direct technical assistance, in coordination with FtF IAM's co-financing, could have improved the real-time understanding of capacity constraints and performance gaps.

With the lessons learned in the first season, the farmers wanted to plant a second season and the FtF IAM adapted its intervention to cater for the challenges faced in first season. FTF IAM and NARO deepened their relationship through joint planning and monitoring of the activities to ensure timely implementation. The partnership came up with planned activities for the IRB farmer groups and assigned responsibilities and resources including time, lead persons and budget. The partnership co-invested on the planned activities such as training farmers in bean production (planting, crop management, Post-Harvest Handling), IRB campaigns, training of District Agricultural Officers (DAOs) in seed inspection and certification in Karamoja. FtF IAM and NARO also collaborated on access to foundation seed. FtF IAM organized farmer groups and introduced agro-insurance to 196 farmers to protect farmers against risks derived from weather changes, pests, and disease outbreaks. Whereas NARO accessed foundation seed for the farmers and continued to provide technical assistance during production and post-harvest handling trainings. The realized output was that the 196 commercial and smallholder farmers from 6 farmer groups grew IRB seed, 479 acres of total production area were utilized, 115kg yield per acre was realized and a total of 54.92 MT of QDS seed produced. QDS yields were better in the second season than the first season (37kg per acre).

In 2022, based on the experience of the last two seasons, FtF IAM adapted its approach. The Activity reallocated resources from performance-based awards to capacity building of the groups through technical assistance in enterprise development so they can operate as commercially viable entities – Local Seed Businesses (LSB). The Activity also developed a partnership with the Agro Consortium – a coalition of eleven (11) insurance companies licensed to underwrite agriculture insurance in Uganda that accesses approximately 80 percent agriculture insurance premium subsidies. Further, FtF IAM would facilitate technical assistance to farmers to strengthen linkages with Ministry of Agriculture Animal Indust

4. RESULTS: Choose one of the following questions to answer.

We know you may have answers in mind for both questions; However please choose one to highlight as part of this case story

A. DEVELOPM ENT RESULTS

Through the CLA approach, FtF IAM succeeded in incentivizing farmers to grow IRB QDS. Whereas FtF IAM was willing to buy down the risk for commercial seed production in the Karamoja subregion, the Activity didn't have the technical expertise to support the farmer groups to grow IRB seed. The process of getting feedback from the beneficiaries and sharing data with NARO enabled the Activity to better understand IRB seed production in Karamoja subregion. CLA helped the team understand what was working well and what wasn't, challenged them on how they could adapt to respond to upcoming challenges. The quarterly Pause and Reflect sessions also helped the team understand how well the IRB farmer groups were performing and what were the areas of weakness.
For example, after season one, the Activity learned that deeper collaboration with NARO would increase technical capacity of the farmer groups to grow IRB seed. . Farmers have come to appreciate the associated challenges and better understand QDS production requirements and associated production costs. This allows them to better determine the appropriate acreage to dedicate to QDS farming. The team also had joint USAID monitoring visit to Karamoja with other Feed the Future activities that are promoting IRB production and consumption. By promoting IRB seed production with Okeba, FTF IAM has managed to incentive other private businesses like Yield Harvest, an off taker to scale their business in the Soya value chain to Karamoja region thus creating the systemic change within the market system.

5. **ENABLING CONDITIONS: How have enabling conditions - resources (time/money/staff), organizational culture, or business/work processes - influenced your results? How would you advise others to navigate any challenges you may have faced?**

The partners technical expertise and resources, adaptability, and openness to each other influenced the success of the commercialization of the IRB seed production. By reviewing the intervention plans every season, the FtF IAM and NARO team adapted the IRB intervention plan to suit the lessons learned and address challenges.

The enabling conditions were the willingness of both partners to use their expertise and resources to support the IRB farmers and adapt to the lessons learnt. NARO's contribution was their technical expertise while FtF IAM's contribution was the resources offered to buy down the risk of the IRB farmers, since this was their initial engagement as commercial farmers. However, there were challenges initially on who would give the resources for the monitoring visits. Agreement on the procurement procedures and logistics that would be contributed by each of the partners was also a challenge. Farmers also had limited ability to seek out necessary support services from key stakeholders, such as MAAIF and the DAO for seed inspection and certification, and NARO for provision of foundation seed. These challenges were solved through joint planning in the second season that ensured that the roles and resource contributions of both partners were clear from the onset. However, due to an underdeveloped relationship with MAAIF, the farmers did not receive the tamper-proof green QDS certification label. As a result, most farmers sold their IRB as grains locally to consumers and other farmers, and the World Food Program (WFP). Therefore, an exhaustive stakeholder mapping is very beneficial in any collaboration and understanding of the roles of each partner. In addition, networking, and deliberate formation of both vertical and horizontal networks and relationships is important for any activity where more than one implementer in needed.