

# ISSD Africa



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## Outline of the Piloting Phase for a Comprehensive Program on Integrated Seed Sector Development in Africa; Sept 2014 – Aug 2016

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The Piloting phase of ISSD Africa works on the establishment of an African-embedded structure and network of experts, seed programs and associated organizations in the public and private sectors. The aim is to work on complex challenges that are of strategic importance to the development of a market-oriented, pluralistic, vibrant and dynamic seed sector in Africa. Four thematic areas of engagement have been prioritized for this Piloting Phase.

### Purpose of the project

The goal of the project is to support the development of a market-oriented, pluralistic, vibrant and dynamic seed sector in Africa for providing both female and male smallholder farmers access to quality seed of superior varieties. Superior varieties refer to both improved and local varieties most preferred by farmers. Currently, smallholder farmers face challenges in getting reliable access to sufficient quantities of quality seed of superior varieties at the right time and at an affordable price, which affects their agricultural productivity, income and resilience.

### The project and the ISSD approach

The project is a Piloting Phase of 24 months contributing to the development of a five-year Comprehensive Program on Integrated Seed Sector Development in Africa (ISSD Africa). The project is designed based upon the experiences and results of earlier phases of ISSD Africa<sup>1</sup>. Both the Piloting Phase and the Comprehensive Program apply the approach of Integrated Seed Sector Development<sup>2</sup>. The following set of ISSD guiding principles has been formulated to support the design of seed programs and policies:

- Foster pluralism and build programs upon a diversity of seed systems

- Work according to the structure of the seed value chain
- Promote entrepreneurship and market orientation
- Recognize the relevance of informal seed systems
- Facilitate interactions between informal and formal seed systems
- Recognize complementary roles of the public and private sector
- Support enabling and evolving policies for a dynamic sector
- Promote evidence based seed sector innovation

The ISSD approach is endorsed by the African Union Commission as contributing to the implementation of the African Seed and Biotechnology Program (ASBP) program and the seed agenda of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP). The Piloting Phase of ISSD Africa will experiment with and explore ways to address four themes defined by complex challenges that hamper seed sector development at local or national levels, but by their specific nature need to be tackled at the continental level. The project will operate in a niche that complements the work of national seed programs and will recognize complex national realities, learn lessons from a diversity of intervention strategies and feed these into international dialogues.

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<sup>1</sup> ISSD Africa website:

<http://www.wageningenur.nl/en/show/Integrated-seed-sector-development-in-Africa.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Louwaars, N.P. and De Boef, W.S. 2012. Integrated seed sector development in Africa: a conceptual framework for creating coherence between practices, programs and policies. *Journal of Crop Improvement* 26, 39-59.

## Project themes

Themes have been identified through previous analytical studies and workshops<sup>1</sup>, and have been prioritized through an intensive consultative process, convened by the Centre for Development Innovation at Wageningen UR (CDI, [www.wageningenur.nl/cdi](http://www.wageningenur.nl/cdi)) and the Agricultural Development Initiative of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). The priority themes selected are:

### *1. Common challenges to promoting entrepreneurship in seed value chain*

For guiding future interventions in the seed sector, what lessons can be learned from the diversity of existing seed programs in Africa supporting entrepreneurship in seed value chains? A focus on entrepreneurship and market-orientation highlights the importance of farmers as seed users and drivers of the seed value chain, recognizing their requirements in relation to quantities and qualities of seed demanded and varieties preferred. It requires seed entrepreneurship to respond to this demand, by farmers, agro-dealers, service providers and others in the seed value chain. Entrepreneurship and market-orientation are important incentives for sustainable development.

### *2. Access to varieties in the public domain*

What arrangements between public crop improvement programs and private seed companies and/or seed producers contribute to the development of viable and sustainable seed sectors, and thereby increase the access of smallholder farmers to quality seed of improved varieties? An improved demand orientation of public breeding programs and increase in the number of public varieties used for commercial seed production will benefit farmers by increasing their choices in terms of varieties.

### *3. Matching global commitments with national realities*

How can governments of African countries implement their global commitments to various policies whilst fostering a viable and pluralistic seed sector? Global commitments that fail to recognize national realities will also fail to acknowledge the importance of different seed systems in providing farmers access to quality seed. Making these commitments more coherent with the practices and realities of farmers and creating an enabling environment for strengthening multiple seed systems will increase farmers access to quality seed.

### *4. Supporting the AUC CAADP, ASBP and seed sector development*

In practical terms, how can AUC's CAADP and ASBP initiatives contribute to the development of a vibrant and pluralistic seed sector in African countries? An improved integration of seed sector development in the CAADP agenda and alignment with the national investment plans will contribute to more coordinated and strategic interventions at national level contributing

to improved farmers' access to quality seed; this is a clear agenda under the ASBP.

## Establishment of an African wide network

The project will seek collaboration with a wide range of existing national seed programs, to work on these four themes; in this way activities will be grounded in local realities among dissimilar strategies to seed sector development. Themes will be addressed through action research, innovation trajectories, policy dialogues, capacity strengthening, and joint learning in eight to ten pilot countries with relevant stakeholders and partners. The project will facilitate the establishment of an African-wide learning and innovation network of experts, seed programs and associated organizations. The project will contribute to creating an enabling structure and a favorable environment for experimenting, documenting, sharing and learning, enhancing collaboration and promoting synergy in seed sector development.

## Project structure and partners

### *Project coordination*

Executive Coordination is in the hands of a consortium comprised of an African-based Secretariat in close collaboration with the Centre of Development Innovation (CDI) of Wageningen University and Research Centre (Wageningen UR), the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) and Future Agricultures Consortium (FAC) (Figure 1). Tegemeo Institute of Agricultural Policy and Development in Nairobi Kenya (the policy research institute of Egerton University), hosts the African-based Secretariat. An ISSD Africa Advisory Board will be established to oversee the design and implementation of the Comprehensive Program (next five years' phase).

### *Thematic Working Groups*

Four Thematic Working Groups, each consisting of four recognized African experts, plus an expert from the Executive Coordination, will guide the further definition of that theme and the design of corresponding activities. The different Thematic Working Groups will interact, share experiences and lessons learnt through several face-to-face meetings, as well as through an online platform. The Secretariat will facilitate the experience sharing and learning between different themes.

### *National Partners and pilots*

Each of the four themes will be explored through four pilots, in association with four associate National Partners. The project will seek diversity in National Partners, seed initiatives and contexts in a manageable number of countries. National ISSD Consultative Teams and National ISSD Focal Points link the Thematic Working Groups to National Partners and support the pilots where necessary. Focal Points will also coordinate experience sharing at national level.

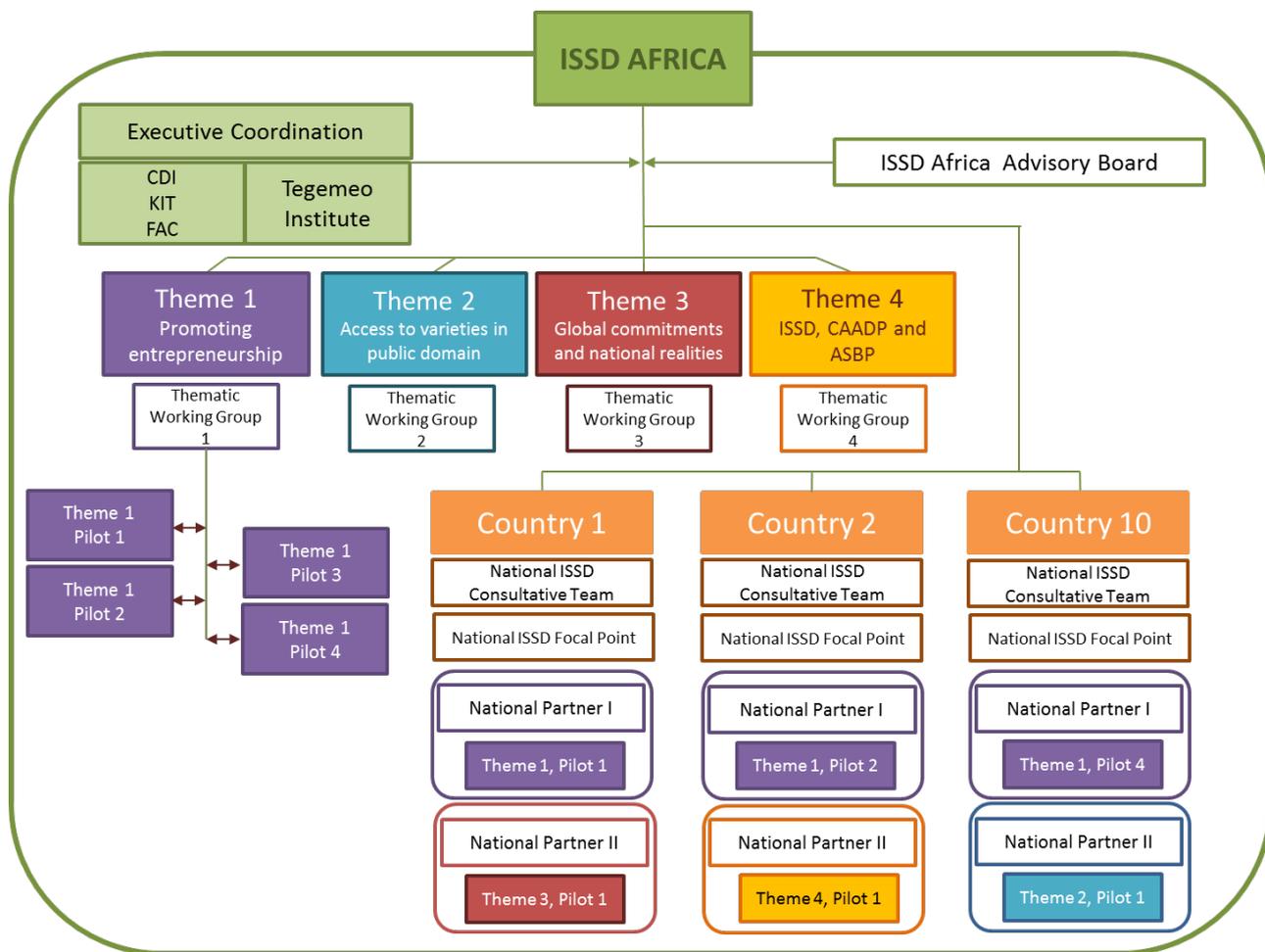


Figure 1 - Program structure

Each of the four themes will be explored in four pilots, in association with National Partners.

### Most important project results

The Comprehensive Program on Integrated Seed Sector Development in Africa aims to enhance reliable access of male and female smallholder farmers to sufficient quantities of quality seed of superior varieties at the right time and at an affordable price, as well as increase male and female farmers' choice in terms of crop varieties, and seed quality, price and availability.

The Piloting Phase of ISSD Africa shall be considered successful when:

- Continental and National Partners take a more comprehensive perspective towards addressing the diverse needs and realities of farmers in their seed sector development strategies and programs;
- The project has identified strategies, modalities and methods to effectively address complex challenges, faced by continental and national stakeholders in the African seed sector, that can be incorporated into a Comprehensive Program;
- The project has created an enabling structure and a favorable environment for experimenting, documenting, sharing and learning, enhancing collaboration and promoting synergy;
- An African wide learning and innovation network has been built around a commitment to bring to scale the

validated experiences of stakeholders and proven structures and modalities.

### Project support

The project is supported through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Dutch government.

### Contact persons

- CDI: Marja Thijssen (marja.thijssen@wur.nl) and Karen Verhoosel (karen.verhoosel@wur.nl)
- Tegemeo Institute: Mary Mathenge (egerton@tegemeo.org)
- KIT: Willem Heemskerk (w.heemskerk@kit.nl)
- FAC: John Thompson (j.thompson@ids.ac.uk)