



Sharing Experiences in FOs Involvement in GAFSP Processes

Introduction

The knowledge learning and sharing workshop entitled “**Lessons Learned from Farmers’ Involvement in GAFSP Processes**” was held last November 9-11, 2012 at the Cambodiana Hotel in Phnom Penh Cambodia. This sharing workshop was organized by AFA, AsiaDHRRA and CSA, hosted by FNN, and supported by Agricorn. The workshop was organized as one of the activities under the IFAD/Agricorn project entitled “Supporting Inclusive Planning of country projects financed by the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program,” a two-year project being supported by IFAD that will end on December 2012.

Participants included representatives from farmers organizations and agri-agencies in GAFSP-eligible countries in Asia, namely, Cambodia, Mongolia, Nepal and Bangladesh (online). Cross-learning from Africa was made possible with the presence of farmer leader from Senegal/RROPA who is also involved in the GAFSP engagement process.

Prior to the scheduled workshop, participants also attended a national consultation on GAFSP among farmers organizations, civil society organizations, and the GAFSP implementing agency of the Cambodian government, through the Ministry of Economic and Finance, and the Asian Development Bank, who is the Supervising Entity for the cooperation. Dr. Yaing San Koma, President of CEDAC and Asia CSO representative to the GAFSP Global Steering Committee, also joined.

On the last day of the workshop, participants proceeded to Takeo province to meet with local farmer organizations engaged in savings and credit, small-rice milling operations, farm production diversification, etc.

On November 12, an M&E mission on the GAFSP Cambodia project was carried out by a team from AFA, AsiaDHRRA and CSA. The M&E team had discussions with ADB supervising personnel on the GAFSP funded projects and discussions with other CSOs involved in the project. A solidarity night was organized by FNN on the evening of November 9.

This brief summary of the proceedings of the rich sharing and learning workshop is an attempt to provide an overview of the experiences of national FO platforms organized to influence, engage and participate in GAFSP processes. Some key lessons and recommendations were highlighted.

Experiences with GAFSP processes

From the sharing of experiences of FOs/CSOs in GAFSP countries such as Mongolia (NAMAC/ADRA), Nepal (ANFPA/WOCAN), Cambodia (FNN/CEDAC), and Bangladesh (KKM/ActionAid); regional FOs such as AFA and ROPPA; and agri-agencies such as CSA and AsiaDHRRA, some observations can be distilled which give an overall picture of what the involvement in GAFSP processes has been like.

Although the engagements encompass a whole range of themes and issues, there are some broad objectives that are at the heart of these engagements. **Food sovereignty** is on top of the list, as the GAFSP itself is a global effort to ensure food security in countries where hunger is most pronounced. **Empowered FOs** is an important accompanying objective, as successful involvement of FOs in the GAFSP process requires FOs who will proactively push for their agenda. **Participatory and good governance** is another broad objective that creates the condition for successful FO and CSO involvement in the process to ensure that the GAFSP project truly addresses the problems surrounding food insecurity.

However, this process is beset by problems of **lack of transparency and openness of some governments**. Although, governments have increasingly becoming more open to CSO and FO engagements and participation, some agencies within governments are still reluctant to CSO/FO participation. But, in spite of this and in response to these problems, there have been several initiatives by FOs/CSOs in GAFSP engagement. These include: **building FO/CSO platform** through



National Dialogue between FOs and Government of Cambodia on farmers engagement with GAFSP projects.

activities such as FO profiling; **capacity building** through activities such as training on constructive engagement and policy advocacy; **engaging government** through consultation workshops and by providing comments in the project design; **community visits/consultations/validation**; and, **active role in GAFSP SC** by uploading and downloading information.

These initiatives have resulted in some concrete **gains**. **FOs/CSOs have commented/influenced the GAFSP project design** (sites, components, etc.). **“Warm relation”** has been established among FOs/CSOs and partly with government. In one country, there is also **complementation** in MTCP (another IFAD funded cooperation with FOs in Asia), GAFSP, and other CSO processes.

Some lessons learned from the experiences

Analyzing the experiences as to what made them successful or unsuccessful, by using some key criteria or basis for analysis, and coming up with concrete indicators or evidences for such a judgment or analysis allowed the participants to reflect on factors that positively or negatively influence the outcomes. This analysis, as well as the description of the experiences that they were drawn from, is a continuing process that does not end with this report. However, this early, some key lessons learned may be gleaned from the analysis that was facilitated during the workshop.

Involvement in a GAFSP requires the presence of strong FOs who will push for their agenda in the process. This will ensure that the project design and implementation really responds to needs of small scale farmers who produce food but who are also the hungriest. Good leadership, strategic positioning, proactive coordination among FOs from global to national and local levels are key factors that help build strong FOs in the process.

The political context obtaining in the country greatly influences the extent or limit of FO/CSO involvement in GAFSP and other public programs. An ideal political climate is one where democratic space is



Experiences and knowledge sharing on the process involved in influencing and engaging governments on the GAFSP funded projects

present, and where government is relatively open and where there are concrete mechanisms for transparency and accountability.

FO/CSO involvement in GAFSP and other public programs is largely a matter of capacity, attitude, and paradigm. It helps if FOs/CSOs are clear on their objectives and the broader agenda that they will pursue as a united front. This also presupposes some skills in engaging government and in coalition building among FOs themselves.

Successfully working together, whether as FOs/CSOs, or as government institutions, will have to rely on some intangibles such as trust, relationship, social capital, and solidarity. These are often a product of the history of working together in the past.

As with any multi-stakeholder project that aims to be participatory, the creation of a networking and coordination platform is of key importance. This has to be established among FOs/CSOs, and governments.

FOs/CSOs often maximize existing mechanisms and initiatives and past experiences in engaging public programs such as GAFSP. They use existing strategic relationships and positions as leverage for greater involvement and access to resources.



One major factor that helped FOs/CSOs become more engaged in GAFSP processes is the design of the project itself that calls for FO/CSO participation through such provisions as Annex 3 of the Global SC output document on ensuring Quality Participation in GAFSP. This was further enabled by the presence of resources or catalytic fund for such involvement. The parallel funding from IFAD to support FO participation was deemed of significant value that made the engagement exercise more productive and feasible.

Some recommendations for moving forward

From the analysis and the lessons that were gathered, strategies and activities have been identified that can be undertaken to address gaps and maximize opportunities at the national, sub-regional, regional, and global levels, both at the short term and the long term, as well as support needed by FOs/CSOs to facilitate their partnerships with government/other stakeholders to be able to access public resources.

Strategies and activities that can be undertaken

Continuous monitoring of GAFSP implementation through the national FO/CSO platforms.

At the regional level, for example, AFA can continue uploading and downloading information.

Address lack of information dissemination from government and lack of consultation.

This can be done by proactively seeking information from the government, as what CSOs in Mongolia can do after they have seen what Cambodia FOs did. They can also participate in various government meetings by inviting themselves, if need be.

Lack of consultation can be addressed by lobbying for the creation of a national project steering committee with thematic sectors. CSO platform for GAFSP should be established or sustained and should participate in the international and regional cooperation. Link with regional CSO platforms like AFA and AsiaDHRRA will be pursued.

Have more assertive interaction with government.

This can be done through follow ups, attendance in meetings, and lobbying for the creation of thematic sector working groups at national level. Assertive interactions with government and stakeholders at local to national level can be attained through strong and strategic designing with clearly defined roles.



Continue and strengthen linkages.

There must be proactive seeking of information and dissemination with other FOs/CSOs on government programs.

Linkages are also needed for more effective advocacy. To strengthen linkages and increase mutual understanding and effectiveness as well as resource generation, there must be a continuing dialogue among FOs and CSOs, constructive dialogue with government and donors, stronger with GAFSP process through AFA, AgriCORD, AsiaDHRRA, etc. and mutual fund raising activities.

Pursue capacity building and learning.

In Mongolia, the lack of capacity of the FOs/herders can be addressed by national CSOs core group by developing a program to strengthen and build capacity (e.g. NAMAC cooperatives at provincial and municipal levels) and to improve CSOs delivery of services.

In Bangladesh, they can do at least two years close observation and follow-up of the formation of farmers' association at district level under the project "Strengthening Kendrio Krishok Moitree (KKM) for Enhancing Solidarity among Farmer Associations in Bangladesh."

This also means capacity building for fund raising and campaigning/advocacy to ensure their rights. At the regional level, this means providing technical assistance and capacity building to FOs on the following: a) networking, government policy processes and frameworks; b) constructive engagement/policy advocacy including strategy and tactics; and c) leadership development, organizational management, fund management, including local farmer groups who are members of national farmers organizations.

Establish or strengthen communication system.

This has to be established or strengthened through the national level platform of FOs and the regional level platform of regional FOs like ROPPA and AFA.

Carry out knowledge management activities.

This must be done within the network and among vertical and horizontal partnerships. In Bangladesh, this can take the form of experience sharing among the national and district level stakeholders; and exchange visits for the between countries and regions for best practice sharing with an aim of model replication for greater platform.

At the regional level, AFA can facilitate documentation of experiences, convening of learning exchanges, making knowledge products (videos, case studies, issue papers, primers, modules).



Strengthen partnership with CSOs.

Roles should be clarified, CSO platforms processes and other initiatives must be sustained, and consolidation must happen beyond GAFSP.

In Bangladesh, the regional platform has just initiated, so there is a need for close monitoring for activation of the association. Regular guidance for committee formation and issue selection for periodic gathering are also needed.

In Mongolia, the national CSO platform is a first initiative among CSOs working in agriculture and rural development. This has great potentials and should be sustained even for future national and regional policy engagement and cooperation.

Increase accountability.

This can be done by showing that FOs have good track record, are credible, and with governance processes established.

Use GAFSP lessons as spring board for involvement in all major program processes of agriculture and livelihood.

In Nepal, they can influence the Ministry of Agriculture to have a Farmer Desk. They can also use GAFSP to build the capacity of FOs and related CSOs and to increase linkages with country level donors.

Explore the private sector window of GAFSP as a new area of engagement.

This means representation in decision making, downloading and uploading of info, capacity building of FOs, especially cooperatives.

Mobilization of Resources

At the national Level, there is a need to utilize the capacity-building allocation in country GAFSP projects to strengthen FO engagement (e.g. monitoring, evaluation, etc. and 2) in strengthening organized platform; mobilize resources from existing partner-donors, other donors to help strengthen current FO platforms (specific lobby/campaign); and, utilize other opportunities for complementation such as the MTCP Phase 2.



At the global level, explore more programmatic resource building to support FO engagement beyond GAFSP. Draw lessons from upcoming international conference organized by CSA on strengthening FO participation in Public Agricultural Policies and Programs; and, further continue the knowledge sharing among FOs and other development partners.

Support needed

Capacity building for the FO/CSO platform and separately for the FO members of this platform.

This includes capacity building of CSO focal groups and the capacity building of individual FOs.

Financial and technical assistance to sustain gains and for needed support from various partners.

Organizing more FOs to build awareness of their development rights and support the accompaniment of FOs in this process. This includes facilitation for organizing and conducting consultation with different departments of government to access public resources. FOs need support for regular communication and sharing of info, and strategizing sessions.

Mobilize more funding from EU for similar cooperation in Asia, a call to IFAD/donors, AgriCord and agri-agencies. In Africa there is a concrete proposal for the “EU Program: Supporting Policy Dialogue (SFOAP in Africa).” This is the program equivalent to the MTCP in Asia. It includes a capacity building fund of 15M Euro in 43 countries, on top of other similar on-going projects to support FOs. AgriCord agri-agencies are involved in this partnership cooperation.

This fund for Asia could also support regionally coordinated, nationally implemented projects, linking N-S, S-S, joint advocacy with regional and intergovernmental agencies (ASEAN, SAARC, ADB, WB).

List of Participating Organizations

1. Asian Farmers Alliance (AFA)	- Asia regional farmers association
2. National Peasant Alliance (ANPFa)	- Nepal
3. Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture & Natural Resources (WOCAN)	- Nepal
4. Farmers Nature Net (FNN)	- Cambodia
5. Farmer's Life Improvement and Future Light Youth Organization (FLIFLY)	- Cambodia
6. Cambodian Farmers Association Federation of Agricultural Producers (CFAP)	- Cambodia
7. National Association of Mongolian Agricultural Cooperatives (NAMAC)	- Mongolia
8. Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)	- Mongolia
9. AsiaDHRRRA	- member, Agricord
10. CSA	- member, Agricord
11. SCC – Southeast Asia	- member, Agricord
12. Network of Peasant Organizations and Producers in West Africa (ROPPA)	- observer, Africa
13. Centre d'Etude et de Développement Agricole Cambodgien (CEDAC)	Cambodia
14. Water Association	Cambodia
15. Action Aid Bangladesh	Banglades – on line participation