Transformative Capacity Strengthening and Integration

Why Capacity Strengthening?

Capacity development has always been seen as the core business of ASARECA, having been established as an Association for “strengthening” research capacity of the sub regions national agricultural research institutes and multiple stakeholders.

Focus

Through this thematic area, ASARECA is undertaking a comprehensive and holistic approach to the identification and strengthening of the different types of AR4D capacities and competencies at the systemic, organizational and individual levels to support the attainment of inclusive and sustainable agricultural transformation in the ECA member States. To be effective, this approach involves a process of consultation between the NARS and all other relevant capacity strengthening stakeholders including universities, private sector, farmer organizations and civil society among others.

The strategic result areas required to deliver this thematic area include:

- Strengthen and integrate capacities and competencies for inclusive stakeholder engagement, strategic visioning and policy formulation;
- Strengthen and integrate capacities and competencies for generation, access and utilization of agricultural knowledge and information; and
- Strengthen and integrate capacities and competencies for effective institutional development, management and performance monitoring and evaluation.

Challenges and Opportunities

Some of the major challenges, stated in the opportunity format, that this thematic is addressing include the following:

- Institutionalizing and catalyzing strategic capacity strengthening partnerships to address AR4D capacity needs in the ECA sub region.
- Responding to organizational development capacity strengthening needs of NARS with special attention to the weaker NARIs.
- Strengthening capacity for establishing enabling environment for AR4D to support agricultural transformation.
- Strengthening capacity for effective organizational management, governance and performance assessment.
- Building sustainable capacity to build capacity so as to create a sustainable AR4D capacity in the ECA sub region.
- Supporting the integration of research-based learning outputs into the curricula of institutions of higher learning to support capacity development.
- Strengthening capacity for developing and repackaging of cost-effective training materials, approaches and delivery mechanisms including the use of the revolutionary ICT technologies.
- Strengthening capacity for changing mindset and focus of agricultural policy makers, planners, institutional/research leaders, managers, researchers and agricultural practitioners.
- Strengthening capacity on formation and management of successful and value adding partnerships.
strategic alliances and collaborations.
- Supporting training and retention of adequate research scientists and technical support staff particularly in the weak NARIs and in specialized fields.
- Strengthening capacity for researchers and extension personnel in communication and promotion of uptake and scaling up of technologies and innovations.
- Strengthening capacities for collection and sharing of knowledge, information and experiences for informed decision making.
- Improving leverage of the existing AR4D capacities to get more done with the available capacities while working on long term improvement of capacities.
- Developing need-based and functional capacity monitoring and evaluation system for tracking the outcomes and impact of capacity development initiatives.

Key Achievements

- **Infrastructure capacity strengthening**: Over 400 assorted infrastructure and facilities have over the years been provided to targeted partner institutions particularly the weaker NARIs.
- **Human resource capacity strengthening**: Over 60,000 stakeholders have over the years been trained in integrated water management, value addition, soil fertility management, value chains, monitoring and evaluation, agronomic and management practices among others. Over 150 students benefited from ASARECA long-term training through Masters and Phd. studies.
- **Capacity Gaps Assessment**: ASARECA conducted the capacity Gaps Assessment for ASARECA secretariat and ASARECA member NARIs and identified critical gaps at the Secretariat and among its partners in member countries. The identified capacity gaps were in the areas of: knowledge management, communications, policy analysis, financial management, human resources management, monitoring, evaluation and learning. This informed the development of the Capacity Strengthening Plan integrating capacity development needs for both the member NARIs and the Secretariat. To actualize this, ASARECA developed a capacity strengthening matrix for its stakeholders, which is now under implementation.
- **Benchmarking**: ASARECA conducted a benchmarking exercise in 2021 that brought together scientists from the National Agricultural Research Institutions (NARIs) to enhance peer-to-peer learning share and exchange knowledge, information and technologies. The event was hosted by the National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO), Uganda and was attended by 43 Scientists from the in 8 countries namely: Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and Sudan. Key learning areas included: (i) laboratory diagnostic tools; (ii) bio-policy and bio-safety in agriculture; (iii) aflatoxin management; (iv) commercialization of technologies (tissue culture, biotechnology and hydroponics technologies); (v) bio-fortification of banana through genetic engineering; (vi) livestock nutrition and embryo transfer, (vii) integrated pest management strategies, and (viii) marketing and the role of private sector in agricultural research for development.
- **Implementation CAADP-XP4 Programme**: ASARECA successfully signed a grant agreement with IFAD to implement the four-year (CAADP-XP4) Programme in November 2019. The total grant amount is Euros 5,370,000. The CAADP-XP4 Programme is primarily a capacity strengthening initiative of the European Union, which has provided added impetus to ASARECA’s capacity strengthening mandate. CAADP-XP4 Programme objective is to enable agricultural research and innovation, including extension services, to contribute effectively to food and nutrition security, to economic development and climate mitigation in Africa. At the Continental level, the Programme is co-implemented with CAADP Pillar 4 FARA, AFAAS, CORAF and CCARDESA. It is implemented with the ASARECA NARS.
- **Coordination of continental capacity technical working group**: As the chair for the Capacity Working Group under the CAADP-XP4 Programme, ASARECA organized various meetings
including: (i) development of the CSP; (ii) fostering of partnerships and networks between CAADP-XP4 program partners and DeSIRA LIFT project and FAO-CDAIS TAP project.