

Feeding the Future

SAFE newsletter

October 2015



Message from the Chairperson of SAFE

SAFE is a highly successful capacity-building programme designed to incentivise mid-career extension agents by enabling them to obtain qualifications through degree courses in a network of participating African universities and colleges.

The extension agents advance their careers, African universities and colleges benefit through shared and targeted curricula in an industry – agriculture – which is critical for African economies. And extension – underserved for so many years – now has an expanding pool of qualified extension staff. Everyone wins – not least the smallholder African farmer, who must rely on the advice and assistance she or he needs from the extension services.

Two years ago we celebrated SAFE's 20th anniversary in Ghana and it was remarkable to me what the programme had already achieved. Having recently attended the East Africa Regional SAFE Networking Workshop, in Kampala, I am even more impressed by the progress made and the results obtained – as this newsletter will show.

SAFE today owes much to the vision of a number of key people in those early times, including Yohei Sasakawa, Dr Norman Borlaug, Chris Dowsell, Professor Samuel Kwasi Adjepong at the University of Cape Coast, and the team at Winrock International in the USA, whose close working relationship with SAFE has been invaluable and instrumental to its success.

The world of extension is changing – from a monopoly of public sector institutions to private sector companies and public-private partnerships; thus the opportunities opening up to SAFE graduates are expanding rapidly. Those interested, please contact us for future possible collaboration.

The African smallholder farmer, with whom we work – particularly the woman farmer – needs effective extension services.

We know our programme is in good hands with Deola Naibakelao and his team. We look forward to further expansion and development.

Hon Professor Ruth K Oniang'o
Chairperson
Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA),
Sasakawa Africa Fund for
Extension Education (SAFE)

SAA Founders:
Mr. Ryoichi Sasakawa,
Dr Norman E. Borlaug,
President Jimmy Carter

Self-financing – key to expanding the SAFE programme

Since the 20th anniversary of the Sasakawa Africa Fund for Extension Education (SAFE) in November 2013, celebrated in Ghana in Accra and at the University of Cape Coast (UCC), where SAFE was founded, there has been a further expansion of the programme.

In nine African universities, 21 institutes of higher learning have now embraced the SAFE curriculum, from 19 in 2013 – while the number of graduates has risen from 3,183 in 2013 to 4,242 in September this year (see table). A further 1,268 are currently taking part in the programme for a total of 5,540 compared with 4,428 in 2013.

In Mali, the University of Ségou has admitted its first batch of 25 students. In Nigeria, Usman Dan Fodio University has launched its mid-career extension programme. This new programme in Nigeria is fully funded by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD). This brought to two the number of universities supported by the central and state governments.

In Ethiopia, Jima and Wollo universities have started their programmes.

"Most importantly, these universities are self-financing," says SAFE Managing Director Deola



Hawa Mohhamed, a mid-career student at Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia, demonstrating her SEPs for farmers and her supervisors

Naibakelao. "The role of SAFE was to help develop the curriculum and ensure the technical backstopping. This is a major lesson that should be learned by other universities or colleges which want to engage in the SAFE programme.

"Up to now we have relied on the generosity of The Nippon Foundation to fund our activities all these years," Deola Naibakelao adds, "but with the rapidly growing awareness of the value of SAFE in incentivising mid-career extensionists, there are no limits to our growth – and what we can achieve for African agriculture."

Tackling current issues – internally and regionally

In July, SAFE held its annual staff retreat in Kampala, Uganda, followed by the East Africa Regional SAFE Networking Workshop from 27-28 July. Both were opportunities for looking at a whole range of issues affecting SAFE and its partners – the participating universities and colleges.

The agenda items, presentations, and discussions for the retreat mainly focused on enrollment, graduates, Supervised Enterprise Projects (SEPs), curriculum development, alumni, program expansion, partnership with government, and other key issues.

The retreat also put forward ideas, from the SAFE perspective, for the 2016 Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) to be held in Nairobi, Kenya. The forthcoming World Food Prize in Des Moines, Iowa (USA), in November, and SAA / SAFE's side event at the event, was another topic on the table. There is an enduring link for Sasakawa with the World Food Prize, which was created by Dr Norman Borlaug.

The meeting also discussed the SAFE board suggestion of establishing hubs for SAFE programs in different regions so as to increase SAFE profile and visibility. The retreat recommended that FBO strengthening activity should give more emphasis to capacity building in the form of training, and recommended that proper

mechanisms be put in place to control and administer the repayment of the revolving fund.

Meanwhile, the East Africa Regional SAFE Networking Workshop convened for two days with the theme: "Supervised Enterprise Projects (SEPs): an opportunity for actualizing the value chain concept in the BSC program for mid-career extension professionals". Around 60 participants attended the workshop where experiences were exchanged on orienting the value chain to extension delivery. How far should this be extended and taken forward?

The meeting acknowledged that delivery was still biased towards production – as was training, specialization and staff establishment, though with some focus on cooperatives. It also identified the high staff turnover of Development Agents (DAs) as another challenge, with curricula not meeting the needs on the ground. It set out a way forward giving refresher, or short courses, as a means of reorienting the focus to the value chain.

Presentations and discussions brought to the surface the complexities in the value chain approach. The workshop put emphasis on the role of universities to lobby, and meet with, political leaders to influence policy and make extension visible.

Feeding the Future

COMMENT

Tremendous efforts have been made during the last four years by our participating universities and colleges to mainstream the concept of the value chain in their curricula. This move was prompted and underlined by two challenging issues confronting smallholder farmers in Africa: global competitiveness and effective use of the value chain approach to farming.

Farming must be viewed as a competitive business operating in a global market under fierce competition. Today, market-oriented agriculture teaches us that consumers' demands must be foremost in our minds before we embark on agricultural production. It is therefore imperative to produce high caliber extension staff who can effectively and efficiently assist farmers along the entire agricultural value chain.

We are embracing the concept of 'enterprise centers' as a tool for our interventions both for students and farming communities. Students are involved in the management of those centers in order to become familiar with the essential business practices required for organizing a profit making farm enterprise. The enterprise center is based on SAFE's core values of firstly, learning by doing, secondly the value chain itself and, thirdly, the enhancement of entrepreneurial skills.

Several universities are now considering alternative modes of delivery to broaden access to the programs. These include distance education, part-time summer vocational work, sandwich courses and e-learning.

SAFE has developed a training model which has been accepted by all stakeholders as an effective way of addressing the issue of upgrading the professional knowledge and skills of mid-career agricultural and rural development extension workers. There is an urgent need to mobilize local resources to scale up this model.

Thus curricula at the participating universities and colleges have been reviewed and revised with the special aim of incorporating the concept of

the value chain. This concept is well accepted by the universities which are now working hard to include it in their teaching. The courses on value chain are jointly taught by a team of lecturers from various departments. Our current efforts are directed at consolidating the value chain approach in our programs. Given the fact that not all lecturers are conversant with the value chain and its application, we are putting more effort into conducting training workshops and seminars for them.

There is also a need to develop specialized curricula for the BSc degree in order to respond to the context-specific demands of the individual countries. For example, the current mid-career curriculum in Ethiopia is weak on pastoral issues. To correct this situation, we have engaged two universities in two pastoral regions – Jijiga University in Somali Region and Semera University in Afar Region – to develop a pastoral-oriented curriculum. The curriculum was developed, reviewed and approved during a validation workshop involving representatives from the two regional governments, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and the two universities. The new specialized program will be launched in the coming academic year. An additional outcome of this process was the creation of awareness, at Federal level, of the inadequacy of current curricula at diploma colleges which are run by the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry has expressed an interest in also reviewing the curricula of diploma colleges in pastoral areas.

These are among the many new challenges that we are facing and surmounting.

Dr Deola Naibakeleo
Managing Director, SAFE



Gender challenges and resource needs

One of the major challenges the SAFE initiative is facing is the low level of women's participation in the programs. The root cause of this can be traced back to primary and secondary school education where agriculture is not taught as a discipline. Moreover, girls are not encouraged to choose agricultural studies at university level. As a result, the number of women enrolling in the program is very limited. Given the important role women farmers play in agriculture in Africa, it is imperative to have a critical mass of women extension staff in order to address their needs more adequately, efficiently – and sensitively.

The second major challenge is the shortage of adequate resources needed to implement the programs. This is due to the general fact that budgetary allocations, by governments, to tertiary education is far too low. In many cases, universities and colleges must struggle hard to carry out their functions. Until governments give priority to this area, universities and colleges will continue to struggle.



First batch graduates of University of Illorin, Nigeria: they graduated in September 2014.

The role of alumni associations

SAFE Alumni Associations have been established to put mid-career graduates under one roof in terms of experience sharing, contributing to the improvement of agricultural extension service delivery in their own countries and, consequently, the development of agriculture at national level. In short, it keeps students of the program in touch with each other and, indeed, with the program as a whole as it develops.

Alumni Associations have therefore helped to strengthen and facilitate networks among SAFE graduates while linking up with other sister institutions in agricultural education. They have promoted the welfare of farmers in their respective countries by establishing lines of communication between participating universities, agricultural extension professionals, researchers, academic staff, and policy-makers.

SAFE provides funds for alumni members to participate in national and international professional and networking workshops so that members can upgrade their professional qualifications. In addition, with SAFE's financial support, all alumni associations organize an annual alumni congress to debate on topical agricultural issues and produce an annual newsletter.

The first SAFE Alumni Association was established in 2002 in Ghana. Currently, there are 16 Alumni associations in nine program countries. These associations helped to supervise SEPs, in degree courses, making the supervision easier for lecturers and students. In addition, the associations are helping with the collection of graduates' tracer information in their respective countries. Universities have hosted alumni associations by allotting offices in their compounds. Alumni associations, too, are working closely with the departments of agricultural extension in their home ministries of agriculture. SAFE will continue providing financial and technical support to strengthen alumni associations. For example, three new alumni associations in Ethiopia (Wollo and Jimma) and Nigeria (Adamawa) will be established in 2016. They will have an apex committee at national level to coordinate issues of common interest across associations.

The alumni associations have planned to increase the revenue from membership fees so as to cover office expenses while updating the data bases of mid-career graduates. They have agreed to participate on curriculum development issues and provide inputs for activities involving extension, such as national workshops. They will also actively participate in curriculum development and review other areas where extension can be strengthened at their respective universities. The SAFE alumni associations are truly important contributors to agricultural development.

SAFE celebrations

SAFE was central to the celebrations marking the anniversary of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Dr Norman Borlaug, held in Uganda in July 2014. The celebrations included a two day symposium in Jinja, to coincide with the annual National Agricultural and Trade Show. But, before that event, SAFE helped to organise a symposium at Makerere University in Kampala.

Entitled "the relevance of universities in national food security and agricultural transformation," the overarching theme, in honour of Norman Borlaug, was "take it to the farmer," his last words before he died in 2009.

In his opening remarks, Associate Professor Paul Kibwika, Head of the Department of Extension and Innovation Studies – who was instrumental in planning the symposium – described SAFE as a "strong partner of Makerere in the area of mid-career training for extension." The main question was "how can universities be more instrumental in transforming smallholder agriculture in Uganda? How can we best take our valuable knowledge and innovations to the farmer?" This was the essence of the SAFE/Makerere approach, he added.

Picture shows Makerere's Chancellor, Professor George Mondo Kagonyera, welcoming former Benin President and SAFE/SAA board member, Nicéphore Soglo, to the symposium – with the African Union Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, Tumusiime Rhoda Peace.

In a formal address to the symposium, Chancellor Kaygonyera expressed his appreciation to SAFE for partnering with Makerere University, "not only to strengthen agricultural training but in extending agricultural knowledge to smallholder farmers in Uganda. Thanks to this support from SAFE, Makerere has trained over 700 extension workers some of whom are holding leadership responsibilities in ministries and NGOs".

SAFE Student Statistics, as of September 2015

Mid-career B.Sc. and Diploma Courses	Graduated	Current	Total
University of Cape Coast, Ghana (B.Sc.)	505	45	550
Kawadaso Agric. College, Ghana (Diploma)	561	24	585
Haramaya, Ethiopia (B.Sc.)	507	82	589
Hawasa, Ethiopia (B.Sc.)	205	26	231
Makerere, Uganda (B.Sc.)	371	119	490
Sokoine, Tanzania (B.Sc.)	896	119	1015
IPR/IFRA, Mali (Maitrise)	189	101	290
Samanko Centre, Mali (Diploma)	172	88	260
Ahmadu Bello, Nigeria (B.Sc.)	150	39	189
Bayero University, Nigeria (B.Sc.)	129	65	194
Abomey-Calavi, Benin (B.Sc.)	138	59	197
Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso (B.Sc.)	84	49	133
Lilongwe University, Malawi (B.Sc.)	75	73	148
Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia (B.Sc.)	63	63	126
Adamawa State University, Nigeria (B.Sc.)	-	79	79
Illorin University, Nigeria (B.Sc.)	11	31	42
Mekele University, Ethiopia (B.Sc.)	79	50	129
Wollo University, Ethiopia (B.Sc.)	30	63	93
Jimma University, Ethiopia (B.Sc.)	-	46	46
University of Ségou, Mali (B.Sc.)	-	23	23
Usmanu Danfodiyo Univ., Nigeria (B.Sc.)	-	17	17
Sub-Total	4,165	1,261	5,426
SCHOLARSHIPS	Graduated	Current	Total
Diploma	6	-	6
B.Sc.	33	-	33
M.Sc.	60	1	61
PhD	8	6	14
Sub-Total	107	7	114
Grand Total	4,242	1,268	5,540

The Chancellor "noted with some satisfaction that females constitute 32% of these but I still call for more inclusion towards gender parity." Furthermore, he added, "SAFE is supporting a distance learning program for extension officers with a current enrolment of more than 200 students.



"Take it to the farmer" is a call for Makerere University, in particular, and Africa's academia in general, to get out of our ivory tower mentality and start thinking and operating outside the box."

OUR TEAM

Dr Deola Naibakelao

Dr Deola Naibakelao is a national from Chad. He obtained his PhD in Rural Sociology at the University of Lyon, France. He worked as Educator at several Education Institutes in France and as Assistant Researcher in Japan. He joined Sasakawa Africa Association in 1991 as Program Officer. He is the current Managing Director of SAFE.



Dr Jeff Mutimba

Dr Jeff Mutimba (Zimbabwe) is the SAFE Regional Program Coordinator for East and Southern Africa. In the past 19 years, he has assisted 11 universities in Ethiopia, Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania in developing and establishing extension programs. Jeff taught Agricultural Extension at the University of Zimbabwe before joining Winrock in 1996. In 1997, Jeff obtained a PhD (Agricultural Extension) degree from the University of Zimbabwe.



Dr Mercy Akeredolu

Dr Mercy Akeredolu (Nigeria) is the West Africa Regional Coordinator of SAFE, joined in 2003. Between 1995 and 1998, she worked as Socio-economist for European Union West Africa programme. She has conducted many studies on agricultural extension policy, gender and farmer based organisations. She earned her Doctorate in Agricultural Extension from the University of Ibadan Nigeria in 1991.



Dr Assa Kante

Dr Assa Kante, a Malian national, joined SAFE in 2011 as Coordinator for Mali. Assa has worked with Chemonics International on entrepreneurship development from 1997 - 1998. Between 1982 and 1994 she has worked as a Researcher, Training Manager and Lecturer at Institut d'Economie Rurale (IER) and Polytechnic Rural Institute of Katibougou in Mali. Assa earned her PhD (Agricultural Education) from Oklahoma State University in 2010.



Tesfaye Worku

Tesfaye Worku (Ethiopia) joined SAFE in 2006 as the SAFE Program Officer. Between 2000 and 2004, Tesfaye has worked with Christian Children's Fund (CCF-USA) as Project Coordinator. In 2006, Tesfaye graduated with MSc degree in Rural Development and Agricultural Extension from Haramaya University, Ethiopia.





Mid-career student at University of Cape Coast (Ghana) inspecting and preparing hybrid cocoa seedlings at nursery site to distribute for farmers as part of his SEPs

SEPs – narrowing the gap between theory and practice

One of the innovative aspects of the Mid-Career Agricultural Extension BSc Program is a component in which students plan and execute independent field-based projects called the Supervised Enterprise Projects (SEPs).

The principal objective of SEPs is to narrow the gap between theory and practice. The SEPs are, thus, designed to immerse students in valuable farmer-focused, experience-based learning activities, reduce the discrepancy between training and the tasks the extension staff perform in their real work environment, and avoid the traditional tendency of making the training too theoretical. The essence of SEPs is to develop the students' ability to identify problems and explore practical ways to correct them.

The importance of the Supervised Enterprise Projects (SEPs) in the SAFE training programs is well recognized by all stakeholders, including the primary participants who are the farming communities. SEPs are the nerve center of those programs. Unfortunately, SEPs – for many years – were mainly focused on agricultural production at the expense of the agricultural value chain. This was because production was central at the policy level in many countries. This, however, is changing very rapidly with concentration now on issues like post-harvest handling, agro-processing, food safety and marketing. The time has therefore come to focus the SEPs on those issues within the farming communities. This will go a long way to making the concept of the value chain a reality at the field level.

SEPs are organized in two phases. During the first phase, which takes place at the end of the first year's study, each student goes back to their work areas to conduct an assessment of farmers' extension needs from which each student develops an extension project proposal to address those needs. This is performed with the assistance of farmers, employers and lecturers (supervisors). The second phase takes place after the completion of three semesters of study on campus. During the second phase, students return to their respective work areas to implement their projects, independently, over a period of six to nine months.

In general, SEPs are believed to have contributed to the enhancement of indigenous research capability. The off-campus SEPs reports are also believed to be valuable sources of information for national and international organizations involved in agricultural development.

SEPs are a key contribution to the SAFE programme.

Strengthening Farmer-based Organizations (FBOs)

Since 2013, SAFE has been implementing a capacity development project for FBOs in Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda. This is intended to create strong, viable and sustainable farmer organizations by broadening farmers' economic benefits along the value chain. This project is now showing evidence of positive impact on the performance of farmer groups. Farmer groups have received focused training in relation to improving the depth and skills of their organizations. These have been given in the form of short training courses; on-site coaching; and, look and learn visits.



Farmer with physical disability: Nigeria FBO

So far, 49 training manuals have been developed in areas of knowledge and skills in business; entrepreneurship; group development and management; and, enterprise-specific financial management. Nearly 49,000 FBO members have now been trained on these subjects. In Uganda, for example, a single 'look and learn visit' of a farmer association to a progressive farmer in another district has re-energized FBO members to broaden their income-generating activities beyond cassava which is only seasonal. The members have embarked on poultry and piggery as a result of the visit.

The project ensures that farmers have sources of income throughout the year. The more the members derive benefits from belonging to a farmer organization, the more they want to remain members of the organization.

After training, the amount of savings among farmer groups in the four countries has increased. The groups are also able to give credit to their members – and encourage their members to use the funds borrowed for development purposes. Not only does this encourage members to save for development, but the social pressure also encourages members to work hard to raise the money to save with the group on a regular basis.

Linking farmers to markets

In Ethiopia, several cooperative societies have expanded their income generating activities to include field crops like maize, wheat and teff during the rainy season and irrigation where they grow vegetables during the dry season – including high value crops like seed onion.

The project has played a key role in linking farmers to markets and assisting the groups in negotiating contracts. This has been an important role, given that market outlets for most of the agricultural commodities are informal. More than 25 Multi-Actor Value Chain Platforms (MVCP) have been established in four countries. MVCP is a forum whereby all actors along the commodity value chain (input suppliers, producers, service providers, wholesalers transporters and consumers) come together to identify problems along the commodity value chain and look for alternative solutions.

The project is also helping farmer groups with physical disabilities. Some 300 physically disabled farmers in Nigeria have been organized into two groups and trained in group dynamics and enterprise management. Technical support is provided on their crop production plots.

The project has introduced competition between groups. This encourages the groups to strive to do better as they aim for recognition – and standards rise as a result. So far, the project has provided awards for the 27 best performing FBOs.

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