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Report:

FOODSPAN PRRP, at AAG Conference Room, 29th March 2011

1.0 Introduction

The Participatory Review and Reflection Process (PRRP) was held at the AAG Conference Room on 29th March 2011, as a key feature of the FOODSPAN work-plan, especially in its collaboration with AAG. The 2011 PRRP was special in that the AAG-FOODSPAN relationship was being moved to a higher level of establishing a collaboration with some budgetary allocation to FOODSPAN for execution of specific activities for a twelve-month period. It is hoped the network will eventually be accorded a full AAG partnership status.

In attendance were; the Chairman (Kingsley Ofei-Nkansah of GAWU), Vice Chair (Mavis B Abebrese of CADO), Coordinator (Queronica Quartey of CADO), the Assistant Coordinator (Yakubu Iddrisu), the leaders of trade and agriculture thematic working group (Nicholas Apokerah of TAI and Rashid Zakaria of URBANET-NG respectively), and the southern and middle zonal network leaders (Frank Ebo Mensah of Abibimman Foundation and John Kwadwo Owusu of EPAG respectively). Absent with apology was the northern zonal network leader (Musah Mugmin of GRAMEEN-GHANA).

The PRRP started approximately at 9.30am, with welcome by the Coordinator and the Vice Chair. Issues discussed covered the contextual frameworks of AAG's Right to Food (RtF) and Climate Change (CC) and FOODSPAN.

In her welcome note, the Coordinator noted that the PRRP is aimed at not only deepening FOODSPAN's relationship with AAG, but also taking it to at another level. She observed that this PRRP should have been held in February, but considering movements and costs involved in bringing together Steering Committee members from all the zones, it had to be shifted to now. She hinted that there were a lot of issues to be discussed and so the participants had to push for more action. She reminded the meeting that the AGM demands and AAG strategy demanded that the two organisations enter into strategic alliances, and by



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so doing taking the relationship to another level; it was the reason for the PRRP. This was necessary considering that AAG is to support FOODSPAN to push the Right to Food. She handed the meeting to the Vice Chair, who also welcomed all present to the PRRP.

2.0 CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1 AAG and the Right to Food and Climate Change

According to the Coordinator, in view of AAG agreeing to enter into some relationship with FOODSPAN, apart from the IFSN project, the network would be able to execute more activities with AAG allocation of funds. The proposed activities were informed from the 2010 AGM demands that zonal and thematic levels be supported. She informed that the envisaged collaboration was within the contextual framework of: increased/high food prices; increased inaccessibility of the poor and vulnerable to food; production related issues such as lack of support for small scale farmers and women farmers; climate change issues such as the erratic rain and the so much change that demands a lot more support to be done and; and the fact that not much attention is paid to small scale farmers and women in terms of policies.

These inform the activities of the AAG's Right to Food and climate change team. AAG empowers the small scale farmers and vulnerable to demand for their rights through mobilisation for action and engagement with duty bearers, she added.

On what to do, the Coordinator indicated the need to share information at local / community, national and international levels, support small scale / holder farmers to engage duty bearers and to support mobilization of FBOs locally and internationally. This will ensure the achievement of fulfilment of government's promise of 10% national budget (as it is not solely investment in agriculture), well mobilized and sensitised FBOs, a well-informed FBOs, and resilient farmers to climate change.

The proposed activities outlined included: promotion of market access to Ghanaian farmers; EPAs— promotion of our own products, e.g. rice and cotton; Climate change – AAG support activities to ensure sustainable agricultural production; resilience; low external input



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agriculture (e.g. compost) against the so much promotion of multinational corporations; enhanced soil fertility; water harvesting systems and; enhanced rural livelihoods.

She concluded by urging the participants to consider the source of collaborations by taking a critical look at the proposed activities.

Questions & Answers:

Clarification was sought on issues such as, the concept of PRRP, AAG's position on climate change and the proposed AAG relationship with FOODSPAN.

Before the discussions, John Kwadwo Owusu on behalf of members expressed his appreciation to AAG for admitting FOODSPAN as one of the strategic partners.

On the meaning of PRRP, the Coordinator referred the participants to a hand-out, which was shared at the meeting. She noted all were present at the meeting to discuss and review within a context of what AAG and FOODSPAN stand for. She explained that the meeting was reflecting on the new relationship, but within some experiences or historical information on how to help achieve the objectives. According to her, FOODSPAN would help influence and ensure food security for all and the Right to Food, which are the points of intersection (referring to the first statement and the quotes from Margaret Mead quote on the hand out). She noted that the power to small scale / holder farmers should be mobilized to achieve this end.

The Coordinator also noted that in view of the fact that this is the first time AAG is allocating some resources to FOODSPAN. With the goals of, food for all / the Right to Food and ending poverty and social injustice (which are the issues of intersection between AAG and FOODSPAN), a participatory planning tool in view of the new relationship was necessary. David Eli observed that, this was not first time PRRP was being carried out as a FOODSPAN



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activity, and that it was new because it was the first time a budget was allocated to FOODSPAN.

According to the Coordinator, the collaboration was a trial because FOODSPAN was being groomed to become a full partner (after a year). The Chairman, however, remarked that partnership was better understood as that of equals. Although it might be a weaker-strong relationship, it was important to take out the grooming issue. He noted that in any case it should be both grooming each other. The Coordinator at this juncture stated that all comments were well noted, and expressed the hope an MOU would be developed by the end of the day.

Rashid Zakaria wanted some clarification on what AAG's interest on climate change and sustainable agriculture entails. The Coordinator explained that AAG pushes for low input agriculture and adaptation to climate change. She explained that sustainable agriculture implies agro-ecological practices like mulching, decreasing soil temperature, enhancing soil fertility, and the use of compost, which the poor could do on their own. She noted that farmers should have the capacity to understand and use these low input technologies. She further explained that, for instance, water harvesting could be useful, but the duty bearers do not push for these, e.g. SRI! So advocating for government attention and support in this regard is central.

In response, Rashid stated that sustainable agriculture is good, but it presented a huge challenge. Even though small scale / holder farmers support the ideas, big organizations such as AGRA are promoting the other end, with government even supporting total fertilizer use!

The Chairman added that sustainable agriculture has economical, social and environmental dimensions. He asked; what is economic and beneficial at the small scale/holder and national levels, e.g. bullock farming against tractor ploughing? From the social dimension, the extent to which high input agriculture affect poverty is very important. Environmentally, low input and sustainable agriculture (as explained by the Coordinator) is good for the environment, the Chairman observed. However, he explained that the multinational corporations have



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influence even in the development of curriculum of agricultural institutions and award of scholarships. The issue of sustainability became pressing because of climate change, and sustainable agriculture involves mitigating and contributing to greenhouse effects, the Chairman added.

Interestingly, the most important question posed by the Vice Chair was; if chemicals are not good, why is the government promoting its use by giving subsidy to farmers? It was understood that the orientation and training of people involved at the decision and policy making do not make them understand. For instance, AGRA is pushing CAADP and in Malawi, small scale / holder farmers now depend on Monsanto for seeds. Concluding, the Chairman said members needed to build on the concept of sustainable agriculture; it was agreed that sustainable agriculture, in the context of climate change and food security.

On whether AAG's focus on climate change was in line with Action Aid International, in terms of mitigation, adaptation, finance or technology, the Coordinator explained that Action Aid international's vision is in line with the AAG's vision, except that they are making use of their comparative advantage. And this lies in the gathering of evidence; AAG implements adaptation programmes in the local communities in Northern Ghana, and focus is on policies in favour climate resilient agriculture at the national level. Rashid corroborated that at the community level, URBANET in its partnership with AAG do climate change adaptation by providing training on sustainable agriculture practices. In view of this, the Chairman concluded that the focus of AAG is adaptation and policy influence on national climate change policy (and agriculture) in a desired direction. He then asked what direction? So there was the need to have a shared vision and a clear position on climate change as a network and in the collaboration.

To the apparent disagreement with the Coordinator's statement that AAG is interested in supporting umbrella organizations, instead stating that AAG is seeking to collaborate / partnership with organisations like FOODSPAN, she indicated that the details would be decided by the Steering Committee. She explained that the issues emanated from the 2010 AGM [in view of the points of intersection in food for all and ending poverty]. She added that in policy influence, one needs the masses to mobilize. And collaboration, which means



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working within the umbrella, is cost-effective. The Chairman inferred that partnership is bringing different sets of capacity to the table in collaboration, and making everybody feels they have something to give and not over-emphasising money.

2.2 FOODSPAN

The Chairman, presenting the contextual framework of FOODSPAN, noted that all have come to realize the following: the importance of food as a right; food inadequacy with regard to nutrition; massive poverty; geographical spread and gender characteristic of poverty and; more pervasive character of hunger and poverty in rural areas and in the informal sector.

He observed that, in spite of the various policies and institutions under all governments, the country had poverty growing from 1992 up to 1996, and since 1996 absolute poverty has been declining, though not sure of relative poverty. The Chairman further noted that, CSOs' intervention and activism has been growing, especially in the three northern regions, where hunger and poverty have been more pronounced in spite of massive NGO activities and government projects. For example, although the Upper East Region witnessed the heaviest injection of fertiliser in the history of Ghana with the implementation of URADEP, it is the poorest and suffers most of the hunger.

According to the Chairman, it was in the vein of realising that if CSOs were not making impact as individuals that the need to look at the fundamental causes and the need for a network arose. FOODSPAN was born out of the realization that, no individual organization could make an impact on the root causes of poverty and hunger, especially in making impact on dominant thinking on policies / paradigm and challenging powers or confronting the deep seated powerful interest, with entrenched interest supporting the status quo that perpetuates poverty.

The Chairman concluded that FOODSPAN is interested in partnership and collaborative relationship with organizations, including the AAG that share interests with it. He then asked the meeting whether the participants agree with the perspective espoused on the perpetuation of hunger by certain dominant powerful interest.



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In response, Nicholas stated that it could be that the outcomes are not often intentional, and that intentions may be good or of genuine interest. He noted that there is the need to focus on implementation gaps that seem to run through these various programmes/projects, citing examples of the concept of value chain, participation and the lack of targeting models. However, Rashid shared the view that there is some interests that is pushing an agenda that will not largely benefit the small scale / holder farmers (e.g. from government and other donors). According to him, they tend to promote certain agenda that will not inure to the benefit of the small scale / holder farmers. He illustrated this with his personal observation of happenings at the 2010 national policy fair. He was concerned about the answer the Minister of MOFA's gave to a question of why there is lack of substantive benefits in spite of the heavy investments in the agricultural sector in the three northern regions, that it was the attitude of the people! He suggested the use of the capacity of small scale / holder farmers through mobilization by institutions like FOODSPAN (and not just the attitude). He thinks FOODSPAN could help mobilize the energies of the grass roots for participation in development and implementation of projects and programmes.

The Chairman observed that this discussion is related to fertiliser and sustainable agriculture. He traced the genesis of URADEP to the heavy fertilizer build up in the Europe, which resulted in the influence exerted by the manufacturing companies in convincing the World Bank to help them recover from heavy indebtedness, by forcing developing country into such huge external input agricultural projects. The Coordinator contributing to FOODSPAN's concerns and the way forward in view of the Minister's response, said so much funds went into the north and yet not much development shows that, maybe the people need something else. She asked: Who is informing the programmes, and whose understanding of value chain, if the FASDEP II admits that it is a problem identifying the poor and meeting their priorities?

In wrapping up the discussions, the Chairman noted that: the slight differences in views; the different emphasis on what the root causes of poverty are; the different levels of inquisition of how power relation reflect on policies; how power relations implicate the attainment of certain policies and; criticism of value chain. He concluded that there is the need to do more discussion on the issues, as members need to be on top of the issues in a connecting manner, e.g. biofuels, MIDA, AGRA.



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3.0 PROPOSED AAG/FOODSPAN COLLABORATION

The Coordinator presented the proposed AAG/FOODSPAN collaboration. Referring to a document circulated at the PRRP, she touched on the preamble, which stated that this collaboration is situated in the importance of strategic alliances for increased productive resources for small scale / holder farmers, particularly women farmers.

She indicated that some budgetary allocation was made to FOODSPAN during AAG's APB 2011, in view of the issue of activation of the FOODSPAN thematic and zonal activities as reflected in the 2010 AGM.

On the first quarter of the 2011 activities outlined in the proposal, she hope this meeting would assess them and inform the way forward in terms of what strategies to be employed to ensure effective thematic areas and zonal networks activities in FOODSPAN. She observed that there is high interest in the CAADP process, because it gives the opportunity for civil society to mount some pressure on the government. So the in the principle of social accountability, there could be effective engagement of government on food and agricultural issues. With the investment plan for the agricultural sector and the opportunities for attraction into agricultural, the collaboration's interest should be in getting the farmers to be engaged.

Referring to Action Aid's analysis of the Ghana country investment plan, the METASIP, she indicated that it is envisioned that CSOs can push for some more benefits because small scale / holder farmers hold the key to food security, e.g. women [reference; Action Aid international on unlocking the potential of CAADP).

4.0 2011 OVERVIEW

The overview of the 2011 proposed activities in the collaboration were outlined by the Coordinator, with the expectation that, at the end of this PRRP, an MOU would be generated; inputs for improving thematic / zonal activities would be generated; FOODSPAN's relationship as a partner would be strengthened; and there would be increased policy agreement for food security and small / women farmers.



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Questions and Answers

The Chairman noted that it was an AAG initiative, and that the meeting should aim at making it the collaboration's initiative. He stated that it was important to realise that the non-activeness of thematic groups and zonal networks was an issue. He went on to ask whether members wanted a collaborative relationship and the contents presented, indicating there is the need to have partnership that must be driven by the two partners.

Nicholas also said it was a good initiative from the Coordinator, but noted there were a lot of quotes from AAG CSP IV and little (with only from) FOODSPAN AGM 2010. Accordingly he stated that there must be clear cut structure of the partnership. He explained that there was no need to just jump on the band wagon, and so is the need to find ways of doing things that are of interest to both parties, but may not necessarily be only in the interest of AAG. In response, the Coordinator emphasised that the document was meant to be a working one towards developing an MOU at the end. It was not the final document and that suggestions were welcome, she added.

The Chairman concluded on two things: Appreciation for the initiative; and getting many more things right as a network. In view of this the activities, listed from 1 to 7, outlined for April to November were considered for discussion:

The Chairman posed the question that, among the activities 2 to 6 which one could be used to activate the network, in terms of one that lends itself to activating the zonal networks and thematic working groups? The choices were: Nicholas – activity 3; John Kwadwo Owusu – activity 2; Rashid – activity 2; Mavis – activity 6; Frank – activity 2; David – activity 6, Yakubu – activity 3.

It was understood that the IFSN funds would be used to build the capacity on CAADP. Consequently the meeting settled on implementing activities 2, 3 and 6 as they were strong choices that should be used to activate the zonal networks.

Discussing the activity on sustainable agriculture and the root cause of poverty [and hunger] proposed, the Chairman suggested the thematic working groups (agriculture and environment) were to discuss, GMOs, climate change and generate issues. However,



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Nicholas was of the view that capacity building on root causes will be too narrow and might not achieve much impact. Rashid, on the other hand thought that capacity building at zonal networks was strategic to enable members to generate ideas for onward advocacy at the national level.

On sustainable agriculture, climate change and food security, it was realised that it is important to let organization members, e.g. GOAN, GAWU, undertake the activities. And that tested models by the organizations could be used to support the network's advocacy.

The participants finally settled on the proposed activities 2, 3 and 6 and campaign against agrofuels [plus 7]; 4 and 5 were left out, for the reasons that the IFSN funds would be used for biofuel, budget tracking and capacity building of networks. However, thre capacity building on sustainable agriculture and climate change should go beyond the Steering Committee to include other members.

Lunch break

Conclusions

The Chairman summed up that, three activities (2, 3 and 6) have been agreed upon, with some questions being raised about activity 4 and 5. There would be capacity building on sustainable agriculture and climate change, for policy campaigning / engagement issues at the zonal networks level; each one of them to benefit. The Coordinating Committee to do a concept paper.

For the partnership relationship with AAG, a subcommittee was set up namely, Kingsley (the Chairman), Queronica (the Coordinator) and Yakubu (the Assistant coordinator), was formed to do a draft the MOU for consideration by the Steering Committee.

5.0 LEARNING POINTS; ACHIEVEMENTS AND FAILURES/LESSONS

5.1 The Strengths and Weaknesses of FOODSPAN and AAG

The 2011 PRRP discussed the strengths and weaknesses of FOODSPAN and AAG as learning points and outlined them as presented in the table as follows:



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The Strengths and Weaknesses of FOODSPAN and AAG

Organisation	Strengths	Weaknesses
FOODSPAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Members / human resources; ✓ national coverage; ✓ effective Steering Committee; ✓ food security relevant / key to national development agenda; ✓ thematic interests relevant to food security; ✓ past experience in policy engagement; ✓ rich diversity of network members; ✓ mobilization capacity; ✓ media connections; ✓ effective information in emails; ✓ well known national and international 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No permanent secretariat; ✓ low commitment of members; ✓ lack of zonal activities; ✓ lack of thematic activities; ✓ lack of timely response to emails; ✓ limited knowledge of members; ✓ limited sources of funding
AAG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Well known/credible – for advantage of FOODSPAN; ✓ functional structure – well organized; ✓ reliable predictable funds; human resources and logistics; ✓ international linkages; ✓ clearly defined programmes; ✓ reliable partner relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Tendency to overcrowd others; ✓ poor operationalization of the concept of partnership; ✓ delay in release of funds; poor transparency of funds to partners; ✓ weak linkages with social movements (mobilization)

5.2 Utilisation of the Strengths and Addressing of Weaknesses

Utilising the strengths

To the question of how can FOODSPAN and AAG effectively use the strengths in executing the activities, the meeting indicated the following: Timely release of funds; timely request for funds; use of international linkages to source funds; define the programmes; make use of credibility and members and geographical spread to influence policy, whilst making use of comparative advantage; efficient utilization of funds.



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Addressing the Weaknesses

To address the weaknesses identified, the following measures were agreed: Put in efforts to get permanent secretariat immediately; response to emails in 2 days; plan activities to coincide with major national / sector activities; defining roles to activate more members of FOODSPAN; **Secretariat work – Wednesdays team work (Assistant Coordinator and Coordinator); development a strategic plan by end of April (draft by Nicholas).**

Risk

The risks identified were as follows: At least one-third of members phase out; guard our own mission to avoid side tracking [AAG and other networks]; make sure we are subsumed under other partners and allies; inability to carrying some network members along.

Innovative Ways of Achieving Results with Upcoming Programmes

1. Strategic plan; 2. Make FOODSPAN more relevant, effective and visible; 3. Link up / invite other FBOs/CSOs (networks) to our meetings on common issues / interest; 4. Activation of thematic and zonal groups

5.3 Activities to Feature in the Work-Plan of the Collaboration

Activity 1: training on social mobilization (plus climate change and sustainable agriculture) for 20 persons; concept note; venue is Kumasi/Sunyani; end of April; 2 days.

Activity 2: campaign against EPAs and other trade regimes in June; network leaders at the zones to take care of venues, meetings, and media mobilization; zones to decide which items to work on; to coincide with a big event. Action: concept paper by trade thematic working groups, and supporting papers that will guide the network on trade; use of the email to activate their activities.

Activity 3: climate change and sustainable agriculture [with media interaction]; two days before the AGM (plus 2 days); Bolgatanga is the venue; in first week of august (4 days); concept note by agricultural thematic working groups; invite development partners

After the capacity building we do the media briefing



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Zonal networks will do a follow-up with the climate change and sustainable agriculture at the regional MOFA

By the end of the AGM, a position paper developed and adopted with a work-plan on how to mobilize and advocate on it.

Activity 4: engagement with media on food security (women, public financing, etc); spread over three quarters to be discussed tomorrow.

6.0 CLOSING

The 2011 PRRP was closed after a prayer by John Kwadwo Owusu at 6.15pm