

NFPG ACTIVITY REPORT 2010/2011



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This printing was funded by the European Union through the
Non State Actors Strengthening Programme

2010 ACTIVITIES

1. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the National Farmers Platform was held in Jenoi, Lower River Region, from 27th to 28th January 2010. Over one hundred and forty-one members participated in the program representing the District, Regional and National Executive Committees as well as partners, government officers and other stakeholders.

The meeting was held in line with fulfilling one of the key principles of governance i.e. to give feedback to the general membership on the Financial and Activity Reports of the Platform.

Presentations were done on the 2009 Activity Reports of NFPG including the Financial Report and a presentation for the work plan for 2010. Other side events included a presentation on rural electrification.

2. DISTRIBUTION OF GROUNDNUT PROCESSING MACHINES BY THE NATIONAL FARMERS PLATFORM IN THE COMMUNITIES OF SARE PATEH JAWO IN CRR AND GUNJUR IN WEST COAST REGION IN NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2010

National Farmers Platform The Gambia disbursed equipments and machines worth over D76,000 to Kombo South groundnut farmers in Gunjur, West Coast Region and Sare Pateh Jawo village in Central River Region. The farmers were given this boost in a bid to enhance their income



generating capacities through processing of their groundnut in to groundnut paste.

The objective of this activity was to provide a means for groundnut farmers in this village to increase their income from groundnut production through the provision of groundnut processing equipment and materials. It was estimated that farmers could make twice the amount from the sales of processed groundnuts to groundnut paste than when the groundnuts are sold

unprocessed.

The equipments presented included a high voltage generator, two nut-cracking machines, two groundnut roasting machines, and two grinding machines that turn the roasted nuts into groundnut paste, buckets with lids, pans and sieving baskets.

Farmers in the two communities expressed their joy during the presentation ceremonies and called upon the communities for greater commitment in ensuring that the machines were kept in good conditions, well managed and accessible to all farmers in the locality. The Presentation ceremonies were graced by members of the communities including National Assembly members and the local authorities.

3. MICROFINANCE PROMOTION CAMPAIGN

A week long microfinance Promotion Campaign was held from the 19th to the 26th September 2010 throughout the regions in The Gambia. Supported by the Rural Finance Project, the campaign had as objective to stimulate increase interest and participation of farmers in microfinance facilities at rural level.

The campaign activities included meetings in all the regions including Microfinance Advocacy Radio Program in each of the regions. The meetings gave an insight into the current Micro Finance situation in the rural areas, specifically: The VISACAs, the problems associated with the operations of the micro finance facilities, the potential microfinance facilities have in improving the welfare of the farming communities, and how the current situation could be redressed in order to ensure that farmers derive maximum benefits from microfinance facilities in the country.





4. GROUNDNUT SEED REVOLVING FUND

The European Commission through the Ministry of Agriculture provided 133 tonnes of groundnut seeds and 1500 bags of fertilizer as an emergency support to farmers in North Bank and West Coast Region in September 2008. This request was made to provide seed and fertilizer support to farmers as an emergency response to the poor harvest of 2007

which affected the availability of seeds for the 2008 planting season.

National Farmers Platform through its district structures coordinated the distribution to farmers in the two regions. Farmers were asked to use the support as a revolving loan mechanism to ensure that seeds would still be available in 2008 and beyond. To this end, farmers were asked to pay back the seeds and store them at district level to ensure that groundnut seeds are available to those farmers still needing support subsequently.

To date, stocks of groundnut seeds are still available in some districts in West Coast Region and North Bank Region. In addition, Central River Region and Upper River Region also benefitted from this groundnut revolving fund; a total of 30 bags of groundnuts were distributed to farmers in these two regions in 2010 upon request for support. It is envisaged that more and more farmers will continue to benefit from this support.

5. BANANA VALUE CHAIN

Women farmers play an important role in horticultural activities in The Gambia. Horticulture is generally regarded as a woman's activity. In the Gambia horticultural activities such as banana production are among the activities providing steady income for farmers. Banana Production in The Gambia has been limited to back yard and small scale productions because the appropriate cultural practices are not adopted by the producers. However, there is great potential in increasing banana production in The Gambia because of the availability of fresh water.

The National Farmers Platform in partnership with VECO are looking at the potential to work in the Banana Value Chain with a view to increasing the incomes of farmers and changing the role of women farmers in the Banana Value Chain from marketing of the bananas to increasing their involvement in the production of the banana. To this end, a study was commission in 2010 by

National Farmers Platform The Gambia in partnership with VECO to conduct a study on the Banana Value Chain.

Banana producers have been identified across the country and supported to boost their banana production activities.



2011 ACTIVITIES

1. RADIO ADVOCACY PROGRAMS

The Radio Advocacy Program provides space for increased awareness about the concerns of farmers to the wider general public, particularly policy makers, with a view to providing insight into the problems, achievements, and concerns of farmers and accelerates response to these issues.

The mission of the National Farmers Platform is to serve as “a vehicle for advocacy; informing, harnessing, and lobbying to influence government, private sector, and donor efforts and initiatives for the benefit of farmers”. The Radio Advocacy Program has been identified by NFPG to serve as one of the vehicles to be used to inform the general public about issues affecting farmers and farming activities in The Gambia. The objective of this activity is to bring about increased public awareness about farmers, farmers activities, and their concerns.

In 2010 VECO supported The Radio Advocacy Program in Central River Region and Upper River Region. The radio stations hosting the program were the Brikamaba Community Radio Station in CRR and the Gambia Radio and Television Services (GRTS) Basse Radio Station in URR. The Radio Advocacy Program at the community level brought farmers together on a weekly basis to discuss issues concerning farming and farmers associations in The Gambia.

In 2011, Actionaid supported the weekly Radio Advocacy Program hosted by West Coast Radio in the Greater Banjul Area. The program was on a weekly session, held every Tuesday from 4:00pm to 5:00 pm. Panelists for the program were drawn from Ministries and Projects in Agriculture, Finance, and other stakeholders as well as the Private Sector, representatives from Farmer Associations, Consumer Groups, and other Non State Actors. The topics centered on

different aspects of farming activities and food value chains, including the challenges, successes, innovations, potentials, and possible solutions to some of the problems highlighted. The expected outcome of this activity was that the needs of farmers be heard and policy makers, development partners, and the private sector respond to their needs.

2. NATIONAL FARMERS PLATFORM THE GAMBIA OUTREACH MEETINGS

From 30th November to 9th December 2011 NFPG organised outreach meetings with its membership in two regions; Upper River Region and Central River Region as well as three districts in North Bank region; Upper Nuimi, Lower Nuimi, and Illiasa.

The objective of these meetings was to discuss with farmers on how to enhance the functioning of the Farmers Platforms in these regions and districts.

Some of the key issues discussed at the meetings included

- Mechanisms to put in place to hold regular meetings.
- Bye-laws of the Regional Platforms to ascertain understanding of roles and responsibilities
- Membership profiling, membership cards and contributions.
- Strengthening information flow within the different levels of the Platform
- Discussions on the upcoming congress (District/Regional and National)



The meetings were supported by the Non State Actors Strengthening Program (NSA)

3. LEARNING & SHARING FORUM

A two day 'Learning and Sharing' workshop was held for representatives of farmer organizations on the 5th and 6th July 2011 at the Tango Hall. The objective of the forum was firstly, to create space for farmer organizations to learn about existing projects and programmes impacting farmers' activities in The Gambia and secondly, for farmers organizations to interact and share information about their activities.

A total number of forty participants comprising of representatives of farmer organizations and the media participated in the forum.

There were a total number of nine presentations for the two days. The presenters were a mix of personnel from projects of different ministries, NGOs, Farmers Organizations, and Private Sector who demonstrated expertise in the different topics. All nine presentations were chosen because of their relevance to the promotion of food security in The Gambia. The workshop created the opportunity for the participants to increase their knowledge about these programs and to also ask questions and make observations about the programs. The presentations allowed lively discussions on the different topics.



4. RICE VALUE CHAIN

Rice production plays an important role in the socio-economic life of farmers particularly women farmers in The Gambia. Whilst rice is the staple food in The Gambia, its consumption continues to be dominated by high levels of importation. Local rice production levels have been extremely volatile even with the introduction of the NERICA rice.

It is as a result of this that the National Farmers Platform in partnership with VECO will be working in the Rice Value Chain from 2011 to 2013 to support Rice Farmers to increase their rice production and productivity levels with a view to increasing the incomes of rice farmers for improved food security and livelihoods.

Activities in the Rice Value Chain commenced in 2010 with a study on the Rice Systems in The Gambia. Two Rice Farmers Associations; the NERICA Rice Farmers Association in Upper River Region and the Jahally Rice Farmers Association in Central River Region have also been identified and a study was commissioned to conduct a diagnosis on the two associations with a view to working with one of them. The Jahally Rice Farmers have been identified as the association that the NFPG will be working with in the Rice Value Chain from 2011-2013. An Advocacy Action Plan on the Rice Value Chain has already been developed for this purpose.

REPRESENTATION AT LOCAL/INTERNATIONAL FORA

ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN COTTON PRODUCERS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The National Coordinator made a presentation on the occasion of the Africa Cotton Producers Annual General Meeting hosted by the Cotton Growers Association in The Gambia. The meeting was attended by over forty delegates from across Africa and other European Countries. The meeting was held at the Friendship Hostel on December 8 2011.

PRESENTATION AT GNAIP BUSINESS MEETING HELD AT SHERATON HOTEL FROM 5TH-6TH NOVEMBER 2010

A Business Meeting was held at the Sheraton Hotel from the 5th-6th November 2010 to discuss on the Review of the Gambia National Agricultural Investment Plan (GNAIP) document. The National Farmers Platform representing a voice in Civil Society made a re-action to the GNAIP Document.

PARTICIPATION AT THE ANNUAL LIVESTOCK SHOW/RAM SALES

On the Occasion of the Annual Livestock Show and Ram Sales, the National Farmers Platform participated as one of the presenters in a symposium held as a side event to the Annual Livestock show. The topic presented was: Encouraging Private-Public Partnership in Livestock Development: Expectations of Farmers on Public/Government Interventions

INNOVATIONS IN EXTENSION CONFERENCE NAIROBI, KENYA NOVEMBER 2011

The National Coordinator was invited to participate in the Conference in Innovations in Extension and Rural Advisory Services in Nairobi from November 15th-18th 2011. The Conference was organized by CTA in partnership with several other organizations working in Extension and Rural Advisory Services.

ADOPTION OF CHARTER ON FOOD CRISIS PREVENTION AND CONTROL IN GUINEA CONAKRY

In November 2011, the Farmers Platform President for Upper River Region formed part of a delegation comprising of government officials, private sector and civil Society to attend a

meeting on the Adoption of the Charter on Food Crisis Prevention and Control in Guinea Conakry.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING VALIDATION MEETING IN BAMAKO, MALI

The National Coordinator was invited to participate at the Experiential Learning Validation Meeting in Bamako organized by ANAFE in May 2011. The meeting was held to validate reports of Experiential Learning conducted in some countries in Africa including The Gambia of which the National Farmers Platform participated as one of the respondents to the survey.

STAFFING/STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The Platform continues to be greatly constrained with limited staff of two; a National Coordinator and Finance and Admin Officer. Two Volunteers have been added to the staff complement to support the operations of the Platform One local volunteer and a Peace Corps Volunteer. The volunteers offer support in programs work and Communication related issues in the Platform.

The NFPG office in 2011 purchased a Quick Books Accounting package to improve the efficiency of the accounting system at the office. The Finance and Admin Officer was at the same time provided with a weeklong in-house training on the package.

PARTNERSHIP AND AFFILIATIONS

The National Farmers Platform's main partners are Actionaid International The Gambia and VECO Senegal, Gambia and Mali. The partnership with Actionaid International The Gambia ended in 2011. Whilst The National Farmers Platform is looking for a possible extension of this partnership, VECO has already extended its partnership with the National Farmers Platform to another three years 2011-2013.

The National Farmers Platform will continue to look forward to partnering with Organizations and that it shares the same values with and enhancing its networking in a bid to getting the voices of farmers heard for improved farmer's livelihoods.

In this light, the National Farmers Platform is affiliated with the Africa Network on the Right to Food, ANORF/RAPDA; International Food Security Network (IFSN) and the Employment Network of Non State Actors (ENSSA).

REPRESENTATIONS

The National Farmers Platform in a bid to bring out farmers concerns currently represents farmer's interests in several Project Steering Committees such as the Livestock and Horticultural Development Project (LHDP), Food Security through Commercialization Project (FSCA), Gambia Emergency Agricultural production Project (GEAPP), Community Based Infrastructure and Livelihood Improvement Project (CILIP) and the E-RAILS network.

Through its Learning and Sharing Forum, the National Farmers Platform hopes to provide information related to some of the projects and innovations to the wider farmers associations.

VISIBILITY

The National Farmers Platform continues to enhance its visibility through giving a face lift to its Website. Information on the Platform as well as its activities past and present is now available at: www.nfpgambia.org.

MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the platform currently stands at 365 farmer associations. In 2010, the Platform introduced membership cards. A total number of 1200 was printed in 2010 and 2011 and distributed to the District Platforms through the Regional Presidents. These however, cannot meet the demand for membership cards in the districts. Whilst efforts are being made to make reprints of the membership cards, the district platforms were also encouraged to use some of the funds realized from the sale of the membership cards to make reprints, reducing the burden of the cost of printing from the Secretariat.

In 2011, a profiling of the membership was started with each of the district platforms allocating membership cards and registering the data on their members.

CHALLENGES

In implementing its programs during the period under review, NFPG continues to be faced with numerous challenges as shown below: Lack of mobility, limited staff complement, limited office space, limited funds to implement activities of the Platform.



NFPG PARTNERS



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act:onaid

End poverty. Together.

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