



Final report

From April 29 to May 3, the [A+FS Network](#) convened its second Face-to-Face event, 2 years after a first meeting in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

1 - Some facts

1. **5 themes** were treated during the week: Result reporting, Land Governance, Rural Advisory Services (RAS) and Micro-insurance in agriculture. One module was dedicated to the Network consolidation.
2. In total around **90 persons** participated in the different modules with a constant group of 35 persons participating the whole week. Swiss specialized partners (NGOs, academia and foundations) joined for the Land Governance day. On the last day, a **joint session with SDC E+I network** brought together additional SDC staff, Swiss partners including some private sector representatives and the Swiss Forum for RAS.
3. The constant group was constituted mainly from the **Regional Cooperation** (staff of SDC offices and projects of 13 countries¹ in Asia and Africa) and the Global Cooperation (the Global Programme Food Security (GPFS) in particular) and to a lesser extent from the Humanitarian Aid Domain.
4. SDC **multilateral partners** (IFAD, FAO) provided key inputs that were completed by extensive peer-to-peer exchanges in varied forms (country and project presentations, market place and world café).

2 - Lessons learnt on the event – outlook for futures F2F

Positive aspects and recommendations

- ☺ **F2F are key to network evolution:** F2F events create more **dynamics** (concrete objective, result oriented, short term pressure) and exchange between the members, allow visibility of the network and the theme in-house (participation of the directorate, blog announced in the intranet). The dynamic started during these few days gives an impulse to foster further exchanges. The very active participation in the e-discussion organized one month later is proof of it.
- ☺ The F2F preparation has **strengthened the core-group** members that have engaged in the different subtopics. The creation of parallel task forces with core-group members and resource persons (SDC or external) has allowed deepening knowledge and learning among the core-group. The **engagement of the core-group** during the event (co-moderation) was also assessed positively and showed a clear ownership of the process and of the topics addressed.

¹ Mali, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Benin, Mozambique, Tanzania, Rwanda, Laos, Vietnam, Mongolia, India, ,

- ☺ It was a good option to organize the workshop in **Switzerland**. The logistics (visa, travel plans) was easier than in Cochabamba. It was also a good opportunity for the staff of Coordination Offices to visit SDC Headquarters and to complement with bilateral meetings with their colleagues.
- ☺ Beside from the co-moderation (Focal point of core-group member with the main moderator) that proved to be very effective, **innovations** have contributed to a learning and knowledge sharing atmosphere: the interactive and live **blog**, the **visual facilitation** (cartoonist) and the **story telling** sessions where colleagues from the field have explained “what it meant to be a farmer” in their countries. This reality check allowed the participants to keep in mind the final objective of the Network according to the slogan: “with family farmers towards a world without hunger”.
- ☺ The joint day with E+I as well as the coordination with the Gender Network (back-to-back) has brought an added value to the work of the networks through broader exchange and cross-fertilization. In the future, an **increased collaboration with other SDC networks** should be pursued, for instance with:
 - E+I (on RAS and micro-insurance and possible other topics like agricultural education)
 - Climate Change and Environment (CC&E) Network to develop the “climate resilient small scale agriculture” dimension in coordination with one of their working group on adaptation to climate change
 - Resilience could be an overarching theme for a future joint event between A+FS, CC&E and DRR

Points that need further attention

- ☹ **Involve the field colleagues in the preparation.** While the core-group was very much engaged in the preparation of the workshop, it was more difficult to involve the colleagues in the field. The planning process of the F2F started with a survey to all Network members to collect their interest and expectations towards the Network and the F2F. However, neither did we get many inputs by mail nor directly, when core-group members consulted their colleagues during regional seminars.
- ☹ **More space for the National Programme Officer (NPO).** The core-group felt that it would have been good to give more space to the NPOs during the workshop. Language barriers need also to be overcome. In our case, no translation was provided which has limited the participation of Spanish and French speaking Network members. Innovative measures need to be thought of to reach out to particularly West Africa and Latin America.
- ☹ **Assist colleagues making an input:** the quality control of the inputs and presentations to be done during the workshop needs more attention. Clear instruction as well as individual coaching is required to ensure that the inputs fit with the rest of the programme.
- ☹ **Sufficient space for discussion and exchange:** The programme was (too) dense and has not allowed enough time for discussion and networking. More open space with the possibility for the participants to bring their concerns (out of the planning) should be promoted.
- ☹ **Implementation and spreading of learning and experiences:** The follow-up whether some of the topics are implemented or spread further within geographical Divisions was not enough institutionalized. The commitment and to measure the impact of the F2F will be hard to evaluate.

3 - Consolidation of the Network – what will our Network be in the future?

1. **Positioning of the Network.** The F2F was the opportunity to reaffirm the 6 dimensions of Agriculture and Food Security that should assist particularly in the revision of Country Strategies. The dimensions are: production systems, natural resource management, agricultural value chains, nutrition-friendly agriculture, institution building as well as policy and framework conditions for A+FS. The switch from Agriculture and Rural Development to Agriculture and Food Security was also explained: it was considered that Rural Development needed to be seen as the umbrella of many other SDC themes and networks having clear interface with A+FS (E+I, ResEau, DRR, CC&E).
2. **Knowledge sharing for policy influencing.** Until now the Network has fulfilled its objectives of sharing knowledge and good practices, providing thematic support and linking field-based experiences and global initiatives. On the last point, the communication flow so far went from core-group to Network members with information on global policy issues. However, in few cases, bottom-up processes and South-South exchanges have influenced SDC position and policies in particular topics. In the future, it is expected that this trend could be reversed and the topic of post-harvest losses will certainly be a first attempt in that direction.
3. **Working in thematic subgroups:** The main challenge after the F2F is to keep up with the spirit and the momentum, and to deliver on the proposals of South-South exchanges, peer reviews, regional and subgroups which were created. The following groups are either already (a) operational or will become active (b and c) in due future:
 - a. Working group Rural Development in West Africa;
 - b. Working group on Post-Harvest Losses (focus on Africa for the time being and with participation of Regional and Global Cooperation)
 - c. Working group on Pastoralism (focus Horn of Africa, Sahel, possibly Mongolia), ideally with a leading role in the field.

In Latin America a working group on Rural Development exists as well but has had limited interaction with the A+FS Network so far. In addition to that, the recently constituted groups will need to clarify leadership and follow-up (workplan). Furthermore, mechanisms are required to connect the subgroups with the rest of the Network (sections of the website, information in the newsletter, other).

4. **Connection with international networks.** The A+FS Network and in particular the subgroups mentioned above should benefit from SDC connections with international networks active in similar topics, in particular with the [Global Donor Platform on Rural Development](#) and the [Global Forum on Rural Advisory Services](#). Synergies should allow enlarging the knowledge and learning communities as well as positioning SDC experiences in the international arena.
5. **Virtual communication.** Between the global or regional F2F meetings, most of the exchanges and interactions between Network members happen in a virtual manner. Participants of the F2F acknowledged the challenge of it but requested to search further for more user-friendly and interactive technologies beyond dgroup and e-discussion. In the future and according to technological options, the Network should offer different

tools like blogs, Q&A, video conference, virtual briefings as proposed by the Global Donor Platform on Rural Development², etc. to facilitate the knowledge sharing.

4 - Outcome reporting at country level³

In view of 12 new Country Strategies to be elaborated in 2012 (in the majority of them A+FS is a priority topic) and the new challenges to define outcomes at domain and country level, the Network put a strong focus on the knowledge exchange around this topic during the F2F. Valuable inputs from the Quality Assurance Section of SDC (Laurent Ruedin) and IFAD Evaluation Office (Fabrizio Felloni), as well as presentations from the participants helped to clarify some elements of this complex issue. Most countries are either elaborating their strategy or have a recently approved Result Framework with little experience on the monitoring aspect. It proved difficult to exchange on and to learn from such early draft proposals of outcomes and indicators.

Key findings

- **Learning in Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E).** The three purposes of the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) processes were reaffirmed during the event: Accountability (towards beneficiaries and country partners, towards Headquarters and tax payers), Steering (ensure the use of the results and findings of M&E in steering further planning process), but also Learning (within the country office, with stakeholders and partners, as well as within broader SDC). The A+FS Network wants to play a role in the learning dimension of the Country Strategies, complementing in that way the methodological support provided by the Quality Assurance team.
- **Involvement of partners** (all stakeholders from government counterpart to farmers' organization including project implementers) should happen as early as possible in the process of elaboration of the Country Strategies and Result Frameworks. Project implementing partners need a good understanding of SDC approaches and tools, as they are the main providers of the data required to feed into the monitoring systems (mainly from the projects but also from the national statistics).
- The Result Framework (RF) presents concisely the **logic of intervention** within a domain (vertical reading) as well as the contribution of the SDC portfolio in a specific domain towards the country objectives and outcomes (horizontal reading). A more explicit formulation of the result chain hypothesis would make the understanding of the RF easier.
- IFAD's input highlighted the difficulty to define outcomes and to report at country level, this is very much alike with SDC's own experience. A **country program is more than the sum of projects, and** includes "non-project activities" such as the policy dialogue carried out by the Coordination office with partners on national level, knowledge management and communication, as well as partnership, alignment and harmonization strategies.

² See the virtual briefing given by the Focal Point on the A+FS Face-to-Face: <http://www.donorplatform.org/virtual-briefings>

³ For more details see specific report prepared by Philippe de Rham under the following link: http://www.blog4dev.ch/ard-f2f2012/files/2012/04/2_summary_report_outcome_reporting.pdf

- An **appropriate choice of indicators** is crucial in the M&E of the Country Strategies. During the F2F, draft proposals were shared. In the A+FS domain, Country Strategies revealed a large diversity in the formulation of the outcomes and indicators, with a lot of contextual specificities. Three indicators were recurrent in the different RF and were considered a first set of reference indicators: i) net or relative income for farmers; ii) increase productivity/yield; iii) adoption rate of new technologies. This first attempt to prioritize key indicators in A+FS needs to be further developed and examined. These indicators seem obvious but are at the same time the most difficult to measure. The monitoring of hard data should be complemented by qualitative and transversal studies that consider farmers' assessments of the evolving situation.

Next steps

- ☞ **Continuous support of the A+FS Network** in the outcome reporting. The core-group will continue to support and act as an advisory group for countries in the elaboration phase of their RF, providing inputs on contents and organizing peer exchange for learning especially at regional level. Good examples and practices will be shared through the intranet. Once finalized, Results Frameworks will be disseminated by the Network.
- ☞ **Definition of common key indicators** will be an ongoing task. Based on an inventory of what has been or will be proposed in the Country Strategies, the core-group will propose a common set of key indicators as a reference for further use. These indicators will be part of the thematic position paper on the theme A+FS (foreseen for 2013).
- ☞ **Workplan 2012-2013.** In 2012 the core-group will clearly focus on sharing Result Frameworks and analyzing the 2012 Annual Reports. In parallel the advisory group will, as mentioned above, work on the indicators. On the **longer term**, the support should continue, with a shift from sharing experiences in planning towards working on the challenges in monitoring. The elaboration of the Annual Report 2013 will be the first test for reporting on the new Country Strategies elaborated in 2012.

5 - Land governance⁴

SDC is active in Land Governance activities in different contexts (see [mapping](#) carried out by the A+FS Network) and increasingly in the global scene. SDC Global Programme Food Security is currently supporting civil society organizations such as the International Land Coalition, private sector initiatives on investments and inter-governmental frameworks like the **Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VG)**.

The F2F was therefore a good opportunity to raise awareness on the Voluntary Guidelines and to discuss their potential use and benefits for the work of SDC and partner organizations at the national and regional levels. A representative from FAO (Babette Wehrmann, Senior Land Tenure Adviser) interacting with the participants (SDC, NGOs and academia) was an opportunity to bring closer global dynamics and field realities.

⁴ For more details see specific report prepared by CDE (Center for Development and Environment) under the following link: http://www.blog4dev.ch/ard-f2f2012/files/2012/04/4_summary_report_land_governance1.pdf

Key findings

- The Voluntary Guidelines focus on **principles** and formulate generic guidelines. As such, the document cannot give operation guidance and specific advice on how to implement. But it can highlight the issues and principles that are important with respect to land tenure. Obviously weak governance structures, weak institutions but also corruption, create obstacles to the VG implementation.
- Nevertheless, participants agreed that the VG are **a significant step forward at the global policy level**. They carry considerable legitimacy as they have been elaborated under the auspices of the Committee on Food Security. Unlike previous VG on other subjects, these were developed in a fully inclusive process involving a majority of FAO member countries, as well as CSOs, academia and the private sector.
- Even though the document is voluntary, it contains a lot of concrete reference to **binding documents** such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as environmental conventions like the CBD and the UNCCD, which have been signed by the partner countries. However, the participants also agreed that without political will it can be difficult to make any progress.
- The VG are considered to be a powerful tool to be used in the **policy dialogue** with Governments in a constructive manner. This way it is possible to create ownership and avoid provoking a defensive attitude. A possible approach could be to strengthen elements from the VG that converge with existing government policies.

Next steps for the GPFS and the A+FS Network

- ☞ High expectations were raised on the follow-up and implementation phase of the Voluntary Guidelines that were officially endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security on 11 May 2012. The A+FS Network core-group will follow up on the international discussion, **inform** the network community of the activities planned for the implementation of the VG and SDC's support in this regard. In particular, the Network will **disseminate the implementation guides** and other material prepared by FAO.
- ☞ In the preparation of the F2F, CDE has started an in depth analysis of SDC projects and the potential use of the VGs for every specific context. This work will be finalized and **put at disposal of the countries** and projects interested and will be added in country factsheet in the current mapping.
- ☞ The Network will continue encouraging members and partners institution to **share experiences and report on their activities on land governance** and to inform the whole community on time (through the newsletter and the website). Specific attention will be given to new projects foreseen (in Mekong for instance), to the Land Matrix project in which the CDE is active as well as to the discussion on Principles for Responsible Agro-investment (PRAI) that has been reactivated within the Committee on Food Security in Rome.

6 - RAS and M4P⁵

Rural Advisory Services (RAS) and the Making Markets work for the Poor (M4P) approach are currently dealt with in two SDC networks: the Agricultural and Food Security (A+FS) and the Employment and Income (E+I) networks. A joint event was organised in order to foster synergies and mutual learning between the two networks.

Key findings

- RAS and M4P are not two “contradicting” approaches but are **complementing each other**: Much rather, RAS is a field of observation and engagement, and M4P gives an analytical framework condition under which the RAS are applied.
- **"Demand" is a linking point** between RAS and M4P, because both are based on the idea that demands are expressed by target groups and met by actors within a given context. Both only work when people have a voice and a choice, so it is crucial that rural advisory systems are democratised and the target groups become agents of their own change.
- **Systemic change**: changing a system does not always take years: sometimes a system can be rather small and it may not take such a long time to change it. The key question then is which systems to target and how to define the entry points in order to stimulate sustainable change within the chosen systems.

Next steps

- ☞ Organization of a **joint e-discussion** in June 2012 including the linked topic of market oriented RAS. Such an e-discussion should also help to identify other concrete experiences how RAS and M4P are combined within projects and programmes.
- ☞ Keep **joint sessions in the agenda of future F2F** (E+I in 2013) and build solid bridges on the longer term between both themes and networks' communities.

7 - Micro-insurance⁶

The A&FS network and the E+I network have commonly organized an afternoon session on Agriculture Micro Insurance. The aim of the session was mainly to give participants a first introduction into the topic and an overview on the different projects SDC is working on, and to foster exchange on first experiences and lessons learnt.

Key findings

- **SDC is financing various agriculture micro insurance projects and initiatives in 6 different countries/regions** (Bolivia, Haiti, India, Southern Africa, Mongolia, East Asia). Most of the projects are in a first stage of insurance product design. Two projects (Bolivia, Mongolia) can already present experiences in the phase of product sale and institutional consolidation.

⁵ For more details see specific report prepared by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation under the following link: http://www.blog4dev.ch/ard-f2f2012/files/2012/04/5_summary_report_joint_session.pdf

⁶ Section compiled by Nathalie Wyser (A+FS) and Hans Ramm (E+I)

- **SDC's role** in the different projects focuses on product and market development, regulatory framework improvements, public insurance awareness campaigns and facilitation of public private partnerships.
- **Profitability of agriculture micro insurance products.** Whereas credit life schemes tend to be profitable, more complex products such as agriculture insurance products often require longer start-up phases and larger numbers of insured clients to prove profitable.
- **Pilot testing:** Pilots are useful to test out new and often complex agriculture micro-insurance products. The cultural environment is key in defining the products characteristics and the processes.

Next steps

- ☞ In the beginning of July, the focal point E+I will present to the directorate an institutional **positioning paper** for the topics of Financial Sector Development in general and Micro Insurance in particular. The E+I network will inform about the directorates feedback on the paper.
- ☞ Organization of **exchange and up-dates** between the different agriculture micro insurance projects as well as with the network communities of both A&FS and E+I networks within existing instruments ([E+I shareweb](#)), E+I micro insurance subgroup, [E+I case studies](#), A&FS newsletter, Savings and Credit Forum).

Further information:

Network website: <http://www.sdc-foodsecurity.ch>

Face-to-Face blog website: <http://www.blog4dev.ch/ard-f2f2012>

FP/core-group June 29 2012