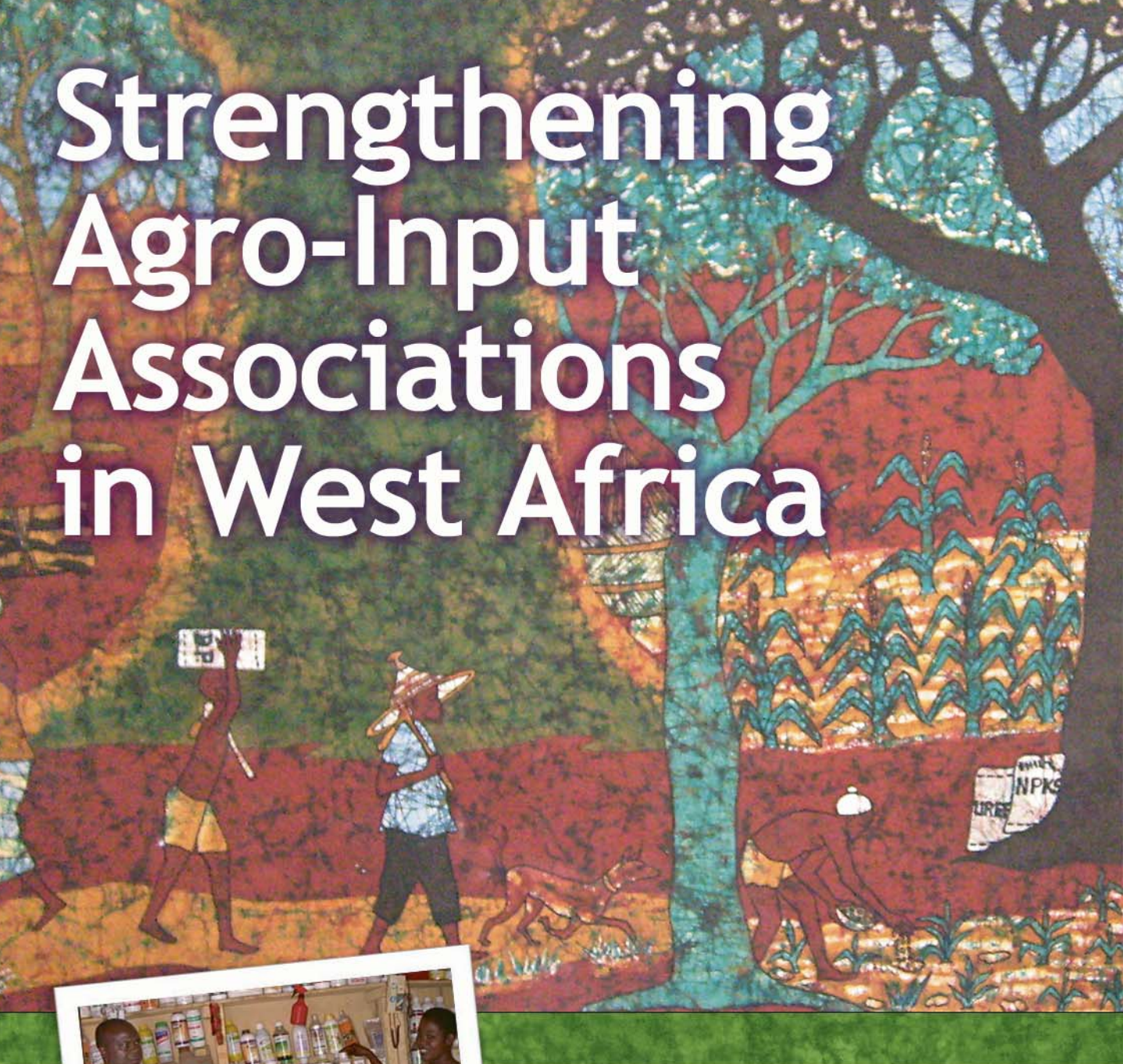


# Strengthening Agro-Input Associations in West Africa



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In markets and small shops like the one pictured above, local entrepreneurs sell seeds, fertilizers, CPPs, and other inputs to farmers. Training and information on the safe and appropriate use of these products are important benefits often provided by agro-input associations.



By clapping his hands, the trainer praises the trainee for using the correct procedure for putting a knapsack sprayer on his back during the Training-of-Trainers follow-up program in Ghana in March 2007. The program was organized in close collaboration with the Ghana Agro-Input Dealers Association (GAIDA) and CropLife Ghana.

In a November 2006 training for regional branches of the agro-input dealer association of Burkina Faso (AGRODIA), the puzzle pieces represent the provinces where the association is active and therefore has a part of the national association accounts. If one piece is missing or not delivered in the correct format, the puzzle cannot be completed.



## Our Strategy on Association Building

Agro-input association development is a powerful tool to assist not only input dealers but also farmers in developing their business. Associations are formal, not-for-profit organizations of individuals or businesses with common interests. They are formed on a voluntary basis to provide members with benefits.

Since the 1980s, IFDC has assisted in association-building activities in Africa, South and Central Asia, and in eastern Europe. Based on these experiences, IFDC has developed a strategy for association building, to maximize the contribution of development projects that often assist associations in developing countries, particularly in their early phases. The strategy emphasizes that in order to become sustainable, any association needs to be founded on four pillars:

- **Capacity building:** This is needed to ensure that at the project's end, association staff and members understand the role of the association and are capable of planning and implementing activities.
- **Revenue Base:** Associations can build financial sustainability by charging membership dues and initiating income-generating activities such as trainings and trade fairs.
- **Ownership:** Members must feel involved and responsible, so they will be motivated to pay their dues and fees, and actively participate in association activities.
- **Independence** can be built if associations have their own bank accounts, budgets, and staff.



More than 600 dealers attended the official launching of GAIDA in Sept. 2004 in Kumasi, which was facilitated by the IFDC GAIMs project in collaboration with GTZ and CSIR. All members wore caps and t-shirts with GAIDA's logo.

### Good associations are also built on:

- **Excellent Leadership:** Good association leadership involves having a clear vision, placing high priority on serving others, and being democratic and confident in decision making.
- **Results-oriented Partnerships:** Building links to technical and marketing partners at the national, sub-regional, and international levels is important for sustainability of associations.
- **Effective Collaboration with the Government:** Governments are key to creating enabling business environments and they have a regulatory role in agro-input trade.

# IFDC's Association Building Experiences in West Africa

Since 2000 IFDC has supported agro-input associations in West Africa through numerous projects. These projects have facilitated the creation of new associations and assisted existing ones in becoming more professional and effective.

## Past Projects

- **ATRIP** - *African Trade Investment Program*. Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria, Mali, Togo; 2004. Objective: Identify major stakeholders in input trade, assess strengths and weaknesses of agro-input associations, and review existing market information systems.
- **DAIMINA** - *Developing Agro-Input Markets in Nigeria*. Nigeria; 2001–2004. Objective: Develop competitive agricultural input marketing systems in Nigeria through capacity building of agro-input dealers.
- **FASEPE** - *Favorable Socioeconomic and Policy Environments for Soil Fertility Improvement*. Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali; 2000–2006. Objective: Improve policy and socioeconomic environments for sustainable agriculture through new policies and empowered agribusiness associations.
- **GAIMs** - *Ghana Agricultural Inputs Markets Development Project*. Ghana; 2002–2004. Objective: Develop competitive agricultural input marketing systems through capacity building of agro-input dealers.
- **MIR** - *Marketing Inputs Regionally*. Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); 2002–2007. Objective: By facilitating the development of a regional agro-input market, strengthen sub-regional and regional efforts aimed at implementing a common agricultural policy in West Africa.
- **MISTOWA** - *Strengthening Regional Networks of Market Information Systems and Traders Organizations in West Africa*. ECOWAS; 2004–2007. Objective: Increase regional agricultural trade and food security by improving and linking the existing regional efforts to generate, disseminate, and make commercial use of market information.

## Present Projects

IFDC will continue to strengthen agro-input associations in West Africa through these ongoing projects.

- **From Thousands to Millions** - Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria; 2006–2010. Objective: Increase economic growth and agricultural productivity, thus improving food security and rural welfare of one million farm families using the Competitive Agricultural Systems and Enterprises (CASE) approach.
- **WACIP** - *West African Cotton Improvement Program*. Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali; 2006–2008. Objective: Increase incomes of cotton-farming households by increasing cotton yields and improving sales.

## Existing Agro-Input Associations in West Africa

Agro-input associations in West Africa are diverse in size, type of membership, and in many organizational aspects.

Some associations are small in **size** and have less than 10 members (e.g., most of the national CropLife associations), while others have several hundred (GAIDA in Ghana). Some associations have mainly **manufacturers and importers** as members (CropLife Côte d'Ivoire), while others have **wholesalers and retailers** (AGRODIA in Burkina Faso). Some associations focus on just one **input** (ANASEB on seed in Benin), while others cover all types of inputs (AFITO in Togo). The West African associations also operate at different levels, from the **local** (AIDAs in Nigeria) and **national** (ORIAM in Mali) to the **sub-regional levels** (FACIA in West Africa). Although most of the region's associations are relatively **young** (less than 10 years), CropLife Côte d'Ivoire is more than 20 years old.

Finally, there are also differences in the **organizational structure, leadership style**, and in the use of hired staff as **executive managers**.

Although the focus of this brochure is on agro-input associations, the IFDC support to associations has also often involved farmer and trader organizations.

The FASEPE project assisted in the creation of the Apex Farmers Organization of Ghana (this photo), and worked extensively with farmer associations in Burkina Faso and Mali. The MIR project involved farmers in several training programs, especially in cotton. Finally, MISTOWA trained members of farmer and trader associations on market information systems and assisted several in improving their management.

## Support to Agro-Input Associations

IFDC activities in association building in West Africa have focused on:

- **Creation of New Associations:** When requested, IFDC assists agro-input dealers in the establishment of associations. Between 2000 and 2007, IFDC supported, often in collaboration with partners, the creation of 11 agro-input associations in the region (ORIAM in Mali; OYSAIDA, KASAIIDA, BASAIDA, FECAIDA, NAIDA, and FEPSAN in Nigeria; GAIDA and SEEDPAG in Ghana; AGRODIA in Burkina Faso; and FACIA at the regional level). In general, this included:
  - Creation of awareness among potential members on the roles of an association and its possible impacts on the business of its members;
  - Facilitation of discussions with a smaller group of dynamic dealers on pertinent reasons for forming an association;
  - Assistance in organizing the constitutive general assembly.
- **Association Management:** IFDC has also provided assistance in association management to agro-input associations in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, and Nigeria. Individual and group trainings were given mainly to executive members, management staff, and active members. Various aspects of association management were covered, including organizational management, record keeping, and action planning.
- **Support to Services—FACE:** Since 2000, IFDC has helped many associations in West Africa to serve their members better and to become more professional in offering their services (*see next page*).



In a training session in May 2005, the members of OYSAIDA in Nigeria brainstorm on specific activities to reach the objectives of their annual action plan.

# Support to Services: FACE

The support IFDC has provided to associations has targeted helping the associations focus on four essential areas of member services: Financial benefits, Advocacy, Communication, and Education (FACE).

■ **Financial Benefits:** Members of associations should always expect some financial benefits from their membership, such as better access to credit. When facilitating credit, as was done through the DAIMINA project in Nigeria, the goal has been the sustainability of credit access. Therefore, IFDC itself has not provided credit but has linked associations to financial institutions and assisted them in setting up credit schemes for their members.

■ **Advocacy:** Advocacy efforts are needed to ensure a good business environment for associations at the local, national, and regional levels. This support has had two parts: associations were assisted in creating awareness of certain issues that are important to their members, and they were trained on how to influence decision makers to achieve positive changes in the business environment. Issues covered included establishment and enforcement of appropriate regulatory systems for inputs, straightforward procedures for opening and operating a business, reduction in counterfeiting and corrupt practices during import and distribution of inputs, and effective ways to license dealers.

■ **Communication:** Associations need to be effective communicators, both internally (with their members) and externally (with other stakeholders). Communication efforts involved various components:

- **Market information systems:** Members of agro-input associations can use market information to improve their businesses. MISTOWA has established Agribusiness Information Points (ABIPs) in several markets in West Africa that are managed by local agribusiness associations. In an ABIP, farmers, dealers, and traders can find information on offers to sell and buy both commodities and inputs. They can also make their own offers, conclude business deals, and ask for assistance in business planning and other management tools.
- **Building partnerships:** Associations were introduced to potential partners such as input suppliers, technical partners, governmental departments, and sister associations.



In Kaduna, Nigeria, the ABIP managed by the agro-input association FEPSAN organized a special training for women on how to use the Internet.

▲ Participants in the regional advocacy workshop organized by MISTOWA in March 2005 in Abuja prepare a proposal on the harmonization of regulations for agro-inputs. Improvements were made with assistance by resource persons from WATH, INSAH, and IFDC, and discussed during a roundtable meeting that included USAID, NEPAD, and the World Bank. The final proposal was presented to ECOWAS.





IFDC's FASEPE project stimulated the creation of the Ghana Agricultural Associations Business and Information Centre (GAABIC) where GAIDA, CropLife Ghana, and APFOG (Apex Farmers Organization of Ghana) share an office, management staff, and other resources.

■ **Education:** Associations also need to provide continuing education to their members. The support given to associations has emphasized the important role of capacity building, both through theory and practice:

- **Study tours:** By conducting study tours at national, regional, and international levels, participants were able to study markets, create links with potential suppliers, and learn more about trade fairs and sister associations.
- **Technical and marketing training:** This included technical and marketing training courses on agro-inputs in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, and Nigeria; some of the training was organized in partnership with CropLife Africa Middle East and WASNET (West African Seed Network). The topics covered included soil fertility, best practices, storage, store management, and marketing as related to inputs.
- **Training-of-Trainers (ToT) and Follow-up:** Training-of-Trainers is essential for reaching a sufficient number of agro-input dealers. Efforts have focused on the development of a pool of master trainers, chosen by their associations to train agro-input dealers and farmers. In partnership with CropLife Africa Middle East, the MIR project developed Training-of-Trainers (ToT) and follow-up programs in which trainers put their acquired skills into practice (*see manuals on back*).

- **Participation in other input-related activities:** IFDC supported the participation of representatives of agro-input associations in trainings, trade fairs, and other events that were organized by partner organizations at home and abroad. Besides gaining new technical knowledge, participants made valuable contacts with other input dealers and suppliers. ■



A master trainer in training in Dakar, Senegal in December 2005 demonstrating how to wear personal protective equipment.

# Training Toolkits

The experiences of working with West African agro-dealer associations, as well as other agro-dealer associations worldwide, are reflected in various training toolkits that IFDC has developed. The toolkits have been tested during training programs and provide flexible tools for future training and support of associations in the West Africa region and beyond. Two toolkits focus on strengthening of agribusiness associations, whereas the other two were specially developed for Training-of-Trainers programs. These publications are available in English and will be translated in French.

## 1 Managing Agribusiness Associations—Starter Kit

This is a practical handbook for new and existing agribusiness associations. The toolkit is written as a guide for management staff and executives of associations to assist them during all steps of the life of an association. Topics include: organizational entities, record keeping, day-to-day management, services, financial sustainability, and meeting procedures.

## 2 Managing Agribusiness Associations—Facilitators Kit

This training manual for facilitators on organizational and institutional development of agribusiness associations covers the same topics as the Starter Kit. The manual guides the facilitators through sessions by providing technical information and ideas for exercises and discussions.

## 3 Training-of-Trainers (ToT)—Facilitators Kit

This training manual for facilitators guides them through a Training-of-Trainers course for agribusiness associations with the focus on the responsible use of agro-inputs. The manual was developed with CropLife Africa Middle East and contains detailed descriptions of sessions including theory and practical exercises.

## 4 Training-of-Trainers Follow-up—Facilitators Kit

Developed with CropLife Africa Middle East, this training manual for facilitators contains descriptions of all sessions for the follow-up program of the Training-of-Trainers course.



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