



A Successful Extension Model with African Smallholder Farmers

A Side Event at the 2015 World Food Prize - Borlaug Dialogue
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BATTLING FOR INCREASED FOOD PRODUCTIVITY AND EVERYONE'S ACCESS TO FOOD

Welcome

This evening is about Norman Borlaug, recipient of the Peace Nobel Prize for being central in the Green Revolution, research passionate, tenacious, inventive, never satisfied, fighting in the field on the side of small farmers, a great doer.

This evening is about his message, what he urged to engage in, about what the Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) and the Sasakawa Africa Fund for Extension Education (SAFE) do.

This message is more fundamental today than ever, as a tenth of Mankind, some 795 million people, is still suffering from hunger¹, tragically with 70% of all hungry people being small farmers, often without land, but cultivating the estates of others. In Africa where SAA is active, hunger is rising.

Those are most imperative reasons to remain humble and to unceasingly battle.

Although progress has been notable, population is growing as fast as food production. More than two billion people have been added to the world population since SAA was founded. And more are yet to come, primarily in Africa.

You will hear tonight about what SAA is all about, about what it does very much to show the way, to inspire others, about an established model to work with small farmers and farming communities.

A glimpse into the origin

To tell you the truth, Norman Borlaug was initially unwilling,

unwilling to get involved in Africa as he was in India and Pakistan. It took a man, as stubborn and visionary to convince him, Ryoichi Sasakawa who simultaneously brought Jimmy Carter on board of

¹ For most of the figures referred to in those remarks, cf. an essential book, Martin Caparrós, *La Faim*, Paris, Buchet Chastel, 2015.

what was to become Sasakawa Global 2000, a unique institution operating in close cooperation with ministries of agriculture, often within the premises of the ministries.

The three of them met in Geneva in July 1985 with the best people around in the field of agriculture, but also in public health. There within a few hours, based on a clear and simple concept, summarized in five words, *Take it to the Farmers*, with the knowledge that solid proven results from research was available, a decision was taken to initiate projects in two countries in Sub Saharan Africa. No theory, no hiding behind the apparent complexity of the task, no long report to cover one's back, no log frame, no feasibility study, no bureaucracy impeding action.

A year later, projects were launched in Ghana and Sudan. In the meantime, countries had been selected based on the availability of locally tested appropriate research results. Heads of States had also been visited and convinced, first of all, Jerry John Rawlings in Ghana, who was the one who should have received the World Food Prize, together with his remarkable Minister of agriculture, Stephen George Obimpeh, without whom Ghana's agriculture would not have gone through a quantum jump.² Man matters.

Norman Borlaug's message was straightforward: I am fed up to see results of solid research sitting on shelves and wasted. Let's bring it to the farmer and convince him that it is worth trying a different approach through demonstrating the effective value to him of technological packages developed by research.

In Ghana, some 40 farmers were initially involved to start with which fields were used to demonstrate on a sizeable plot, - typically half a hectare - the impact of planting proper seeds properly. The year after there were a few hundreds, then a few thousands and then a few tens of thousands. Success was astonishing. The green of the fields was striking, there for everyone to see. Farmers began to be convinced. They trusted state extension agents, simply equipped with adequate know how, boots and bicycles, working hard to spread simple techniques, easy to follow instructions. Inputs were provided with credit attached but to be repaid. It resulted in the doubling, tripling and sometimes quadrupling of production - maize primarily, sometimes already quality protein maize (QPM) as the concern for nutrition was immediately strong. It felt easy. Everyone had the impression that the sky was the limit.

In Ghana, when farmers involved reached the number of some 80'000, the sky began to fall on SG2000. Whenever a small farmer doubles his production, he ceases to be a subsistence farmer and become a commercial one who sells on the market. He necessitates the market and a market which

² On the SG2000 project in Ghana, see Martinez, Eugenio; Akposoe, M.K.; Galiba, Marcel and Hong, C.W., "The Sasakawa-Global 2000 Agricultural Project in Ghana." *Feeding the Future: Agricultural Development Strategies for Africa*", edited by C. Dowsell, CASIN/SAA/GLOBAL2000, Mexico D.F., 1989, pp. 31-55 (Proceedings of the CASIN / SAA / Global 2000 Workshop).

As well as Yudelma Montague; Coulter, John; Goffin, Paul; Mc Cune, D.; and Ocloo, Esther, "An Evaluation of the SG 2000 Project in Ghana," *Africa's Agricultural Development in the 1990s: Can It Be Sustained?*, edited by N. Russell and C. Dowsell, CASIN/SAA/GLOBAL2000, Mexico D.F., 1991, pp.45-55 (Proceedings of a workshop - Arusha, Tanzania, 14-18 May 1991).

And more recently published, Joseph Kwarteng & Ida Kwarteng (Eds.), *Setting the Grassroots on Fire, Agriculture and Sasakawa Global 2000 in Ghana*, Zophai Publisher, Cape Coast, 2012.

functions without distortion. This offers him opportunities to move out of poverty, meaning often first educating his kids. But it implies a change of paradigm, not always easy to cope with.

In Ghana, smallholders had massively increased food production. All at once they reached the market. Prices in agriculture being inelastic, they began to fall. Norman Borlaug's scheme appeared to be in jeopardy. Farmers were not going to get back their initial investment. They could well become worse off than before.

The State intervened. It prevented the market from collapsing. It bought the surplus production, sold it to the World Food Program (WFP) which used it in Angola. A major hurdle in the transformation of agriculture had been overcome.

The volatility of markets brutally confirmed the need for long term storage. The necessity for innovative post-harvest initiatives became obvious. It resulted in generating added value through small scale machinery, food transformation and entrepreneurship. It engaged SAA on the road to thinking about all the stages of the value chain, about an agriculture moving from being "pushed" from research to inputs to production, to an agriculture "pulled" by markets.

The ball had started rolling.

The roots of what SAA is involved in and doing at present are very much in Ghana, in the knowledge acquired through a combination of a multiplicity of experiences of all kinds.

Time to conclude

The challenge ahead is a formidable one.

During the two hours just spent, more than half of the number of the 9/11 victims died from hunger.

During the four days of the World Food Prize event at Des Moines, 100'000 people will have died from hunger,

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Norman Borlaug's message is an optimistic one:

- This is not a fatality;
- This is a man-made disaster which can be addressed successfully and has to be addressed.

What does it takes?

- A vision, few strategic objectives, clear priorities and a long term commitment, to start with;
- A simple, well designed and focused evolving sustainable strategy to be implemented pragmatically;
- Solid relevant and proven research to be transferred to the farmers in the form of technological packages they can choose from, with attention paid to the production of nutritious food;
- A dedicated team of well led and competent trained extension agents trusted by small scale farmers;

- A professional management of inputs, allowing on time delivery at the right place, of the right amounts and of the adequate quality of seeds and fertilizers, with finance provided when required;
- A constant attention to developing realistic value chains based on what the market requires, also of benefit to the farmers, providing them with fair return on investments;
- a constant attention to empower women to be effective and efficient, as they are central in the development of agriculture;
- Investing in farmers organizations as backbones of farmers communities;
- Common sense framework conditions set up by authorities, including adequate public budgeting and proper infrastructure;
- And endless hard work as farming is a never ending challenge.

In short, a simple holistic and practical approach to be systematically and massively implemented so to ensure an increase in the availability of food, and increasingly of nutritious food.

What SAA is engaged in is demonstrating it can be done. It is to others to adopt and replicate, and to ensure scaling up.

Agriculture production in context

To produce the required quantity of food however is only one side of the equation. The roots of hunger are less to be found in the rarity of food than in the inability of the hungry to access to food, as they often lack the money to buy enough to eat.

Hunger is a dramatic consequence of poverty. It is not only the result of poor inefficient agriculture. It is much more the brutal side effect of hundreds of millions people not having decent paid jobs, to be provided by a well-functioning economy and millions of very small and small entrepreneurs. It is too often forgotten that jobs are mostly created by individual entrepreneurs with few employees.

Striking figures, although difficult to estimate, worldwide the number of unemployed or under employed persons might well be not too far from the number of hungry ones.

In other words, addressing hunger implies as much increasing productivity and thus producing more food, as alleviating poverty, and in particular as providing jobs through the promotion of hundreds of thousands, even millions of small entrepreneurs, thus ensuring that the ones who are hungry have enough money to purchase what they eat.

Battling against hunger entails job and rural job creation.

Our humanity and common sense require this to be a priority.

Des Moines, October 14th, 2015