Integrated Seed Sector Development in Africa: Effective Seed Insecurity Response.

ISSD Africa is an international community of practice guiding seed sector innovation and development by addressing Africa's complex seed systems challenges, with the aim of enhancing access to quality seeds of farmer-preferred varieties. The three-year ISSD Africa project funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), seeks to address key seed sector challenges through eight action research topics. The action research topics are led by various partners within the community of practice to provide innovative solutions to the seed sector challenges. Effective Seed Insecurity Response in Emergency contexts is the focus of topic two led by Mercy Corps.

Emergency contexts are typified by complex humanitarian challenges resulting from natural disasters and man-made shocks. Agricultural production systems in these contexts are often rendered dysfunctional. The seed sector is particularly vulnerable to the shocks, with emergencies threatening and compromising the overall resilience of the seed system. Tackling emergencies requires quick mobilization across the humanitarian system to ensure that the right capacities and systems are in place to meet the seed needs. However, in pursuit of speed, seed interventions are often uncoordinated and neither contextualized nor need-based, with the consequence of constraining the long term development of the local seed system and distorting the seed market.
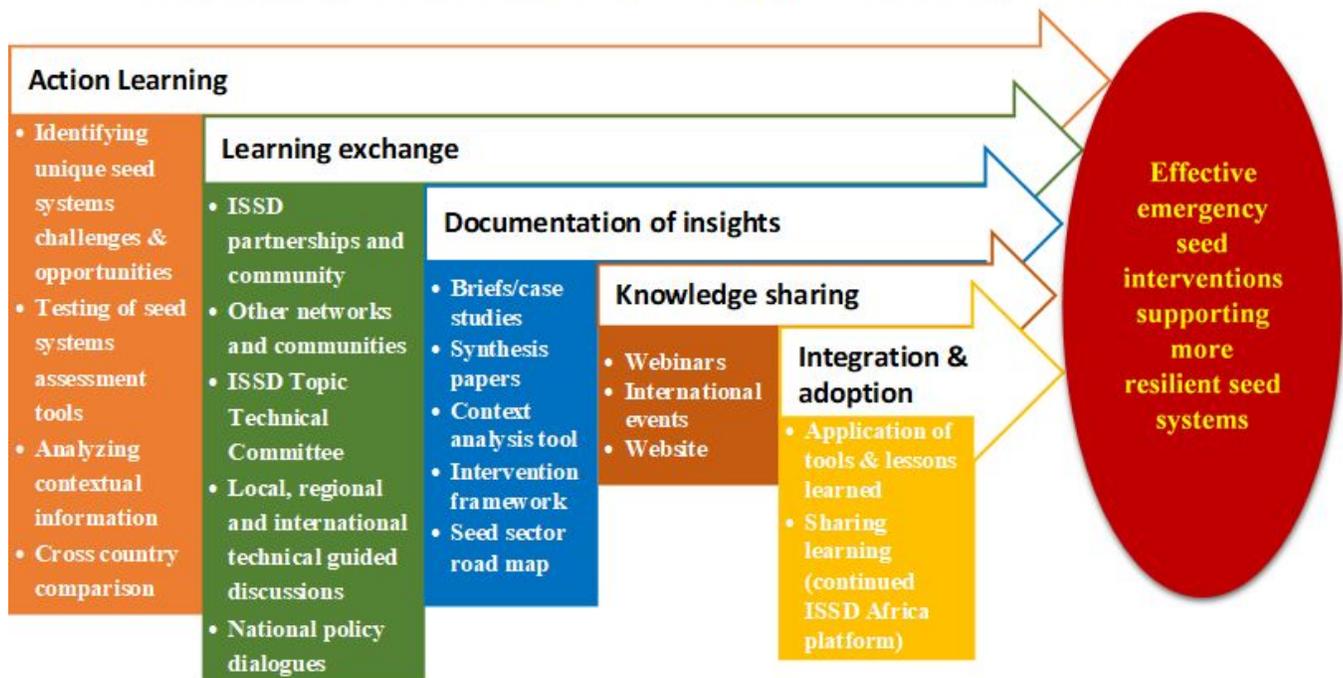

Seed-based responses in emergency environments require speed, but may undermine local seed systems
Photo credit: Henry McInnes - Mercy Corps

In collaboration with various stakeholders, this Mercy Corps-led topic aims to develop or adapt tools for rapid context assessment and prioritization of seed related interventions, to ensure that interventions are timely, less disruptive to seed market systems and contribute to overall resilience of the seed system.

These include a seed emergency response toolkit, a general seed emergency decision tree intervention prioritization framework, seed road map, seed emergency response toolkit and guidelines on best practices to limit market distortions. The tools will be developed in collaboration with seed experts and implementers, tested and refined by implementers and disseminated widely.

Programme phases of ISSD Africa Topic 2: Effective Seed Insecurity Response

Action Learning
- Identifying unique seed systems challenges & opportunities
- Testing of seed systems assessment tools
- Analyzing contextual information
- Cross country comparison

Learning exchange
- ISSD partnerships and community
- Other networks and communities
- ISSD Topic Technical Committee
- Local, regional and international technical guided discussions
- National policy dialogues

Documentation of insights
- Briefs/case studies
- Synthesis papers
- Context analysis tool
- Intervention framework
- Seed sector road map

Knowledge sharing
- Webinars
- International events
- Website

Integration & adoption
- Application of tools & lessons learned
- Sharing learning (continued ISSD Africa platform)

Effective emergency seed interventions supporting more resilient seed systems

Key questions guiding the action research

1. How can we improve the impact of emergency seed interventions?
2. How can emergency seed interventions help create more resilient and improved seed systems in the long-term?

ISSD Africa's approach:

ISSD Africa is anchored on synergy, co-creation, joint experimentation, exchange and learning from ongoing activities.The overall approach is built around: leveraging context knowledge and seeking cost sharing benefits and economies of scope; pulling together existing knowledge and curating best practices; and emphasis on communication and sharing knowledge and results.

How to engage with ISSD Africa

Have you implemented emergency seed intervention?
➔ We are interested in reviewing the context and impact of the seed response implemented

Do you have a case study on effective use of development and market principles in emergency responses to minimize seed systems disruptions?
➔ We can partner with you to document and publish the case study

Do you need guidance on emergency seed interventions?
➔ ISSD Africa/ Mercy Corps team has a pool of resources for sharing

Contact the ISSD Africa/ Mercy Corps team to learn more:
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