Africa Solidarity Trust Fund (ASTF)
Transforming resources into development solutions
Final report 2014–2018
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
The Africa Solidarity Trust Fund (ASTF) is an innovative Africa-led fund to support African development initiatives. The Fund was officially launched in June 2013 at the FAO Regional Conference for Africa (ARC), with initial funding of USD 40 million from Equatorial Guinea (USD 30 million) and Angola (USD 10 million). In addition, the ASTF also received a symbolic contribution (about USD 200) from a group of Civil Society Organizations in the Republic of Congo. The ASTF was established as an instrument for pooled unearmarked funding from African countries to support relevant national, subregional and regional priorities, in full alignment with FAO’s revised Strategic Framework. Its main goal is to strengthen food security across the continent, by assisting countries and their regional organizations to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, eliminate rural poverty and manage natural resources in a sustainable manner. This summary presents key results achieved by the ASTF to support Africa-to-Africa initiatives on food and agriculture. The Fund has already financed 18 programmes/projects (Annex Table 6.1) in 41 countries (Annex Table 6.2) between 2014 and 2018.

All the initiatives funded by the ASTF are consistent with FAO’s Strategic Framework and priority programmes identified by the ARC. They are also in line with the priorities of the Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) agreed between national governments and FAO. Likewise, the thematic focus and strategic relevance of the ASTF are aligned with national and regional priorities and needs, as well as key reference strategies and policy documents set forth by the African Union (AU), such as the results framework of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the Malabo Declaration for 2025 and the Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

The first set of allocations supported six countries, namely, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mali, Niger and South Sudan, which received USD 2 million each to implement projects for a two-year period (totalling USD 12 million). The second set of allocations included selected countries in the four subregions of the continent: Eastern Africa, Central Africa, Southern Africa, and Western Africa, with USD 4 million each for three years (totalling USD 16 million). Thirdly, several countries in regional programmes received support through the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) (USD 4 million). In addition, allocations were made to three countries affected by Ebola (Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone), receiving USD 500 000 each for one year (USD 1.5 million), and a project on short-term South-South Cooperation (USD 1 million). With a budget of USD 1.5 million, the ASTF is also being used to technically support the adoption of efficient and climate-smart agriculture practices in African Small Island Developing States (Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritius and Seychelles). The last allocation went to a regional programme on enhancing capacity and risk reduction of emerging Tilapia Lake Virus (USD 779 450) in Angola, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda. A small amount of funds was kept to support resource mobilization efforts in view of sustaining such an important funding mechanism.

The prioritization of resource allocation from the ASTF was based on the thematic areas identified as priorities, including the following four broad categories: (1) agribusiness, value chains and youth employment; (2) resilience and livelihood support; (3) food safety, food security and nutrition; and (4) women’s empowerment. Five projects focusing on agribusiness, value chains and youth employment received a total of USD 16 million (42 percent of all funds) (Table 1). Another set of nine projects focusing on resilience and livelihood support received USD 11.8 million (31 percent of all funds), followed by three
projects focusing on food safety, food security and nutrition, which received USD 9 million (24 percent of all funds), while a project on women’s empowerment received USD 1 million (although all the other projects have integrated aspects of women’s empowerment as well).

### Table 1. Allocation of ASTF according to thematic areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic area</th>
<th>Number of projects</th>
<th>Budget (USD million)</th>
<th>Allocation (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agribusiness, value chains and youth employment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience and livelihood support</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food safety, food security and nutrition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women empowerment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>37.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding thematic coverage, most projects address more than one theme. In terms of funding for thematic areas (see Figure 1), the highest allocation (42 percent) was made to activities focusing on agribusiness, value chains and youth employment, followed by resilience and livelihood supports (31 percent of all funds), and eradication of hunger and malnutrition (24 percent of all funds) in alignment with the Malabo Declaration commitment to end hunger by 2025.

Projects under agribusiness, value chains and youth employment, resilience and livelihood support, and food safety, food security and nutrition received allocations from 2014 to 2016, with some resources carried over to 2018. On the other hand, while a project on women’s empowerment received funds in 2014, it did not receive any further allocations in 2015–2018 (Figure 2).

Over the past five years, results of these projects demonstrated the vital role of the ASTF as an Africa-led initiative that has benefitted hundreds of thousands of rural men, women, youth and children across the continent through diverse initiatives that sustainably increased productivity, addressed pest and diseases, ensured food security, nutrition and food safety, created jobs and increased incomes. It enabled FAO to assist African countries in addressing agricultural issues linked to food security and nutrition, natural resource management and climate change, while addressing gender and women’s empowerment, as well as rural employment and resilience to livelihoods. The ASTF initiatives have also strengthened capacity and fostered intra-Africa collaboration in food and agriculture.
In Western Africa, the Fund supported rapid-intervention projects during the Ebola outbreak. In addition, decent rural employment opportunities were created for young people through sustainable aquaculture and cassava value chains. In Southern Africa, 4500 experts from eight SADC countries enhanced their capacity to tackle transboundary pests and diseases through training and coordination support, which enabled the region’s successful response to the fall armyworm invasion. Central African countries received support to strengthen food security in urban areas. Nutrition-sensitive agricultural initiatives were promoted in Eastern Africa to combat undernutrition and improve employment opportunities for young people.

In particular, capacity of women and youth groups was strengthened in Liberia, Malawi and Mali. This helped them engage effectively in production and marketing activities, and to start up or boost personal businesses. Countries affected by the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), including Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, were supported, resulting in doubling their rice and vegetable production through better access to inputs. The ASTF project in Niger enabled more than 160 000 vulnerable households to improve their agricultural productivity and food security through quality input distribution, while child feeding and nutrition was enhanced through investments in livestock recapitalization for women and development of small-scale irrigation infrastructure. Six farmer warehouse complexes or “Maison du paysan” (Farmer House) were established in Niger as integrated input and agricultural service centres to strengthen communities’ resilience against drought or other crisis.

In South Sudan the ASTF project helped increase food security, benefitting over 200 000 most vulnerable individuals. It improved the nutritional intake among displaced households, and protected rural livelihoods to different shocks with the distribution of fishing and livestock production kits. Pastoral assets of nearly 19 000 households were protected and the risk of livestock disease outbreaks and mortality substantially reduced through country-wide vaccination and treatment campaigns. In Ethiopia, a web-based system was established for monitoring, promotion of livelihood diversification strategies, integrated approaches to improving food/nutrition security and poverty reduction. Nearly 12 000 smallholder producers benefitted from access to inputs, support to beekeeping and poultry production. Their productions are projected to generate over USD 7.8 million of gross income, enabling them to meet their food and nutrition needs.

At the country level, the ASTF initially focused on humanitarian emergencies in the aftermath of the Ebola outbreak in Western Africa, and various refugee crises following civil conflicts in South Sudan and the Central African Republic. Subsequently, more emphasis was placed on national and subregional development activities, some standalone and some as part of subregional initiatives, most of which were concluded in 2017.

The ASTF has attracted new partnerships and additional funding from bilateral and multilateral partners, clearly attesting to the catalytic effect of the interventions on the ground. For instance, FAO Malawi successfully mobilized an additional EUR 6.8 million of bilateral funding to replicate the impact of the ASTF project. An additional fund

---

**Catalytic and spin off effects**

- In Malawi, the ASTF successfully mobilized EUR 6.8 million bilateral funding from the European Union, and additional USD 32.6 million in a second project.
- In Mali, the ASTF mobilized EUR 1.5 million from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and USD 318 085 from UNHCR to support similar interventions in other regions.
- In Liberia, the ASTF raised USD 1.2 million from the Swiss Development Cooperation for scaling up interventions.
- In Niger, the ASTF mobilized USD 810 300 from the Norwegian government to scale up activities outside the project area.
- In countries of the SADC, the EU provided funding of USD 7 million for the scaling-up of ASTF interventions.
has been provided by the EU to replicate the ASTF project approach in ten other districts of Malawi (out of the national total of 28), with a combined investment of **USD 32.6 million** over the next five years. The regional ASTF project contributing to SADC/SFS work has helped FAO to attract additional **USD 7 million** from the EU to replicate the intervention in all 15 SADC countries.

Likewise, FAO Mali attracted an additional **EUR 1.5 million** from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg to replicate the approach in Segou and Sikasso regions, while UNHCR provided an additional **USD 318 085** to support similar interventions in Kayes Region. At the same time, FAO Liberia raised **USD 1.2 million** from the Swiss Development Cooperation to scale up interventions and FAO Niger mobilized **USD 810 300** from Norway to strengthen resilience of rural communities to scale up ASTF-funded activities. These are just a few examples of the spin-off effects and potential of the ASTF as a catalytic fund to create synergies.

In terms of geographic coverage, the ASTF funded projects/programmes consisted of five regional programmes, five subregional programmes and nine country-specific projects. One of the regional projects was implemented by NEPAD from its Secretariat, which is based in South Africa. All the subregional projects were implemented by FAO and managed from the respective subregional offices. The activities under the projects in Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, and South Sudan have been successfully completed.

The ASTF has an overall positive performance, ranging from upstream policy support, to building capacity at institutional and individual levels. Results of projects funded by the ASTF highlight the value of the flexible funding mechanism as a real opportunity to mobilize resources from African countries, to support priority activities in the continent and enhance sharing of knowledge on good practices and experiences for capacity development.

Both the ASTF evaluation by FAO’s Office of Evaluation and a senior-level field mission indicated several success stories and important catalytic and spin-off effects by ASTF projects, leading to the replication and up-scaling of the interventions by other donors or governments. The focus on regional and national priorities and the flexibility offered by the ASTF allowed for investments in critical gaps, emerging priorities and rapid interventions in addressing key challenges relevant to the different regions in Africa. The predictability of funding was another important success factor. The flexibility of its governance mechanism ensured timely and effective decision-making by its steering committee. The ASTF has also proved to be highly cost-effective; the administrative overhead costs were low (7 percent), thereby allowing most of the funds to reach beneficiaries directly in countries.

The ASTF enables an effective synchrony between the priority challenges currently faced by rural Africa and the development solutions deployed to address them. It supported peer-to-peer learning that helped to upscale good practices, knowledge and technology from one African country to another. It has also successfully demonstrated solidarity between African countries through funding several exchange visits and sharing of short-term development solutions.

Moreover, the ASTF has helped to strengthen partnerships between FAO and its key regional development actors in Africa, including the African Union, NEPAD, COMESA, ECOWAS,
ECA and SADC. The ASTF also contributed to FAO’s overall corporate results and all the five Strategic Objectives (SOs), namely, Eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition (SO1), Making agriculture more productive and sustainable (SO2), Reduce rural poverty (SO3), Enabling inclusive and efficient agrifood systems (SO4) and Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crisis (SO5). The ASTF has also been instrumental for FAO in funding emerging and underfunded thematic areas, such as youth employment, food safety and resilience interventions. At regional and subregional levels, the ASTF has helped to facilitate cross-sectoral work that simultaneously addresses the environmental, social and economic dimensions of today’s challenges.

In conclusion, the unearmarked pooled funding from ASTF has helped FAO to complement efforts by African countries and help drive integrated and cross-sectoral approaches, as well as facilitate intra-African exchanges of development solutions. Looking forward, FAO has made a renewed call and new modalities for expanded partnerships in unearmarked funding towards the ASTF. The future thrust of the ASTF will be the renewed commitment and recapitalization of the fund in order to allow the continuation of this commendable initiative. The new ASTF envisages an expanded financing base with a wide range of African countries and partners contributing to the Fund. It also aims to mobilize national, regional and global capital at scale to accelerate the delivery of the SDGs and other African commitments.