



Preface

Sufficient access to healthy and preferred seed for different crops is of fundamental importance for millions of households in the developing world. If good quality seed is scarce, then rural farming families struggle to make a sustainable livelihood, and family members are forced into coping strategies in order to meet food and income needs. These strategies may deplete assets, further reducing the ability of the family to meet its needs. Achieving and maintaining seed security is therefore an important goal.

Seed security exists when men and women within the household have sufficient access to quantities of available good quality seed and planting materials of preferred crop varieties at all times in both good and bad cropping seasons. Measuring seed security is important in crisis and non-crisis situations as seed insecurity is not confined to post-disaster settings, although it may be at its most acute at these times. Another important context for measuring seed security is in protracted crisis, where the problem may be more chronic in nature. In such cases, the underlying fragile seed situation can be punctuated by acute episodes due (e.g.) to an upsurge in fighting in a particular area which cuts market access. Finally, seed insecurity may be chronic in nature in a non-crisis context, in situations of deep poverty and social exclusion such as that which exists for large numbers of households in peaceful parts of Africa.

Seed-related interventions are commonly based on the assumption that food security problems directly imply seed security problems. However, this may or may not be the case. Further, when problems do occur these are not necessarily related to the physical availability of seed. One of the most common problems is reduced access to seed, due to reduced purchasing power. This can occur even when seed is available on the market. In such cases a more appropriate response to seed insecurity might be a scheme which increases the demand for seed whilst not increasing the supply. This can be achieved quickly through a seed voucher scheme. Longer term solutions would involve actions which reduce poverty, thus increasing purchasing power.

In order to decide on the most appropriate short and longer term seed related intervention, it is necessary to understand seed security by undertaking an assessment prior to intervening. The seed system security assessment (SSSA) methodology, developed by CIAT and CRS (Sperling, 2008), and formalized in the publication “When Disaster strikes. A guide to assessing Seed System Security”, attempts to do this. This tool has been used in several countries in Africa during the past 10 years including Mali, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Sudan (Darfur region), South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Kenya and Côte d’Ivoire. Over the past four years, the tool has been extensively used and further refined by users. Despite this, understanding of seed security and seed security assessment is still restricted to a very small group of specialists. Worryingly, a recent study undertaken in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel found that less than 10 percent of post-disaster seed related interventions were based on Seed Security Assessments (SSAs). This is due to a number of reasons including: lack of technical capacity to undertake assessments; poorly articulated assessment recommendations and low level of awareness of assessment findings by decision makers. This is a serious situation, as undertaking seed related interventions without a proper understanding of seed security can do more harm than good.

With the benefit of funding from ECHO¹, FAO has supported a number of activities which seek to address this situation. Actions have included: development of revised and expanded Seed Security training material; conducting national level training SSA workshops in four countries in the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and South Sudan) and the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger); initiating Communities of Practice for SSA in the Horn and Sahel; conducting regional level Training of Trainers (ToT) courses and undertaking seed security assessments. This Guide for Trainees has been developed as part of this process.

This Seed Security Assessment Level 1 Training Guide for Trainees has been developed by a team consisting of Samuel Kugbei (FAO); Neil Marsland (FAO); Thomas Osborn (formerly FAO, Consultant); Roger Shongo (FAO); Matthias Mollet (FAO Consultant); Joseph Okidi, (FAO); Lucio Olivero (FAO); David Hampson (FAO Consultant) and Philippe LeCoent (Consultant). The formatting and uploading onto the web has been done by Michela Paganini (FAO Consultant). The training guide has benefited substantially from the inputs of Tom Remington and Steve Walsh (both formerly of CRS). This is version 1 and we hope that it will be improved after a period of usage and feedback.

Introduction

Prior to taking this SSA Level 1 training course all participants should have completed the FAO – CRS Seed Security e-learning course, available online both in English (http://www.crslearns.com/seed_systems/menu.html) and French (http://www.crslearns.com/systemes_semenciers/menu.html). The e-learning course ensures an adequate foundation for the Level 1 training.

Undertaking SSA Level 1 training is an essential step in becoming a SSA practitioner and creating a SSA Community of Practice. This training guide contains all the materials necessary for trainees in a standard Level 1 course. The material is built around an adult learning approach to ensure maximum participation and engagement of the trainees. The course itself takes place over five days, with the following sequencing of content:

Day 1 (Section 1, Sessions 1-4) This section of the training is an introduction to SSA and a review of the important concepts for understanding seed security. The key sessions for Day 1 are: Session 1: Welcome and introductory remarks; Session 2: Course overview; Session 3: Seed Systems; Session 4: Seed Security Conceptual Framework.

Day 2 (Section 2, Sessions 5 and 6) This section of the training uses the concepts from Day 1 to examine and build an understanding of the revised Seed Security Conceptual Framework (SSCF) and an introduction to the SSA methodology. The SSCF is the foundation of Seed Security Assessment and a thorough grasp of it is essential for SSA practitioners. Case studies and group work are used to challenge the participants' grasp of the concepts. Using the SSCF and then the Steps in Conducting a SSA is explored through the use of short presentations and Group work. In Day 2, the sessions are: Session 5: Seed security-related interventions in the recent past; Session 6: Seed security assessment: the five steps.

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Day 3 (Section 3, Sessions 7 and 8) This part of the course takes participants through the different data collection tools used in the SSA. There are five core tools: Household questionnaire; Local Market questionnaire; Agro-input questionnaire; Key informant interview guide; and Focus group discussion guide. Emphasis is on detailed explanation of the forms and how to use them through practical exercises. The sessions in Day 3 are: Session 7: Tools for effective, efficient, and rights-based field work; Session 8: Preparing for Field Work.

Day 4 (Section 4, Session 9) Presentation and discussion of the SSA tools is a first step but using them in the field is critical for fully grasping how to gather effective information. This day is for practicing the use of SSA Tools in a nearby village so that the trainees have hands-on experience with the tools and the experiencing of implementing an SSA. The session of Day 4 for is Session 9: Field Work.

Day 5 (Section 5, Sessions 10-12) Accurate data collection is important but determining what the data means is critical. During day 5 there will be practical sessions on data entry and analysis from the tools based on the information gathered in the previous day. There are also important sessions on how to develop SSA analysis using the Seed Security Conceptual Framework and how to turn SSA analysis into action. There are three sessions in Day 5: Session 10: SSA results: Analyzing data collected during the field visit; Session 11: Presenting in plenary the SSA results; Session 12: Evaluation and Closing.