

## ASHC moving into a new phase with a campaign based approach

For four years from 2011, the Africa Soil Health Consortium (ASHC) created soil fertility materials for dissemination to smallholder farmer audiences mainly in 8 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. In the second phase of the project the lessons from phase 1 have been used to develop a new dynamic campaign driven approach. This will be piloted in Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda – subject to suitable partnerships and soil health projects being identified. Work has already started in Tanzania. Here, the ASHC team explain what this will look like.

In early 2015 the Africa Soil Health Consortium team helped convene a group that became the Legume Alliance in Tanzania. This Alliance is testing a new integrated approach to developing and sharing agricultural information, initially with common bean technologies.

The Alliance approach is heavily influenced by the lessons that emerged from ASHC phase1 from 2011-2015 supplemented by the extensive experiences of partners.

The work will contribute to testing the following hypotheses:

- Uptake of new agricultural technologies by smallholder farming families can be improved by creating media and approaches designed to reach all members of the household including younger and older people, men and women regardless of their level of literacy. This will ensure that no one person is responsible for remembering how the technology should be applied thereby making it more likely the technology will be applied correctly.

In Africa the family is the unit of production in smallholder farms. We believe that by providing information across the generations, we can provide an approach to information dissemination in a way that is more equitable.



Agrodealers in Tanzania working on draft point of sale material for use in their shops

## Tanzania bean campaign 2015

In Tanzania in the coming common bean planting seasons multiple media channels will be used simultaneously, each targeting different members of the smallholder farming family. All the messages are nuanced to the needs of the audience, whilst offering consistent information based on sound science and effective business principles. To ensure this all partners work from a single technology brief that has been developed by international and national partners. This is a shared agreement of the techniques and practices farmers need to employ to grow common beans effectively.

The campaign involves testing prototype materials followed by a pilot campaign in the run up to, and during, the short rains beginning in October to December 2015. The emerging lessons will be applied in a scale-up phase campaign for the major planting season, which should start in March 2016. By this time the Legume Alliance will be developing follow-up campaigns on groundnut and soybean.

It is often the case that different organisations in the same locality are disseminating subtly different messages to smallholder farmers. In some cases the information offers completely contradictory explanations and detail. This confuses farmers and impacts negatively on adoption.

Due to budgetary constraints projects usually select dissemination approaches without fully considering the impact of the decision. The choice of media has been shown to have a big impact on who gets access to information – men or women, different age cohorts and people with different literacy levels. Having diverse media approaches means that different groups are targeted so that the campaign creates greater gender equity, in terms of access to technical information.

The group of partners making up the Legume Alliance have similar objectives. Some are media organisations seeking to offer Tanzanians new ways to improve their livelihoods. Some are knowledge partners that have technical knowledge in a certain area and who want to promote specific, proven agricultural technologies. Some are private sector organisations that are delivering the inputs needed as part of the package of practices. What soon became clear was that the partners could be so much more ambitious if they worked together. Their first campaign is called Maharage Bingwa (Champion Beans). The partners wanted a memorable name for the campaign so it would help us track whether farmers really got their information from this campaign. Because it is often very hard to work out questions of attribution in projects, we can test awareness of Maharage Bingwa to see how effective our messages have been.

The campaign involves different approaches to communicating information:

- Youth, including young women, are being reached through Shujaaz comics, linked to youth oriented radio and social media. The pilot campaign included two stories: the August issue focused on good planting and agricultural practices; in September the focus was on selecting the right bean variety. Each month saw the distribution of 200,000 comics, a Facebook campaign and a film on You Tube, each with embedded audience feedback mechanisms.
- Smallholder farming families, including women, are being reached through a series of 16 radio programs, produced by radio stations trusted by farmers - and supported by Farm Radio International (FRI) at every stage of production. These will cover issues including: why grow beans (positive contribution to human and livestock nutrition, livelihoods, soil fertility and the environment); land preparation; bean variety selection; use of quality seed; fertilizer application at planting; planting and spacing; weeding; control of insect and storage pests and diseases; harvesting and storage; and safe use of chemicals.
- Heads of smallholder farming families, both men and women, will be targeted through a pilot of point of sale information displayed in agro-dealer outlets in partnership with the African Fertilizer Agrobusiness Partnership (AFAP) and used by Farm Inputs Promotions (FIPS-Africa) village-based advisors
- Heads of smallholder farming families, both men and women, will be targeted through interactions with public and private extension providers. Extension providers in campaign areas are provided with a short manual so that farmers coming to them for information will not receive conflicting messages.

**The Legume Alliance is making good progress. By October 2015 it had:**

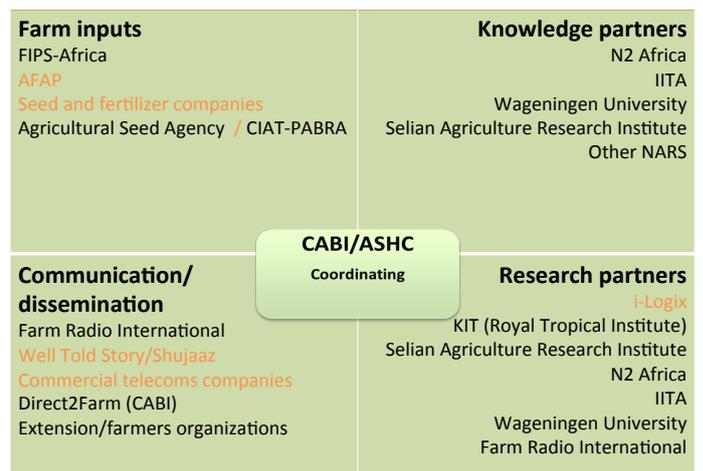
- Produced a country profile of useful background information
- Completed an information needs assessment
- Established and maintained a partnership to work on a bean campaign
- Created a campaign brand in Maharage Bingwa – Champion Beans
- Established a monitoring, learning and evaluation framework for the Alliance work program
- Developed a technical brief from which messages for smallholder farming families were created and integrated into materials including:
  - a youth orientated media campaign (comics and social media)
  - a radio campaign targeting adults
  - support materials for use within agro-dealers
  - support materials for use by extension teams
  - content for SMS and voice information products
- Piloted an information brokerage approach
- Consolidated learning from these activities
- Built awareness of the work of the Legume Alliance amongst peers and organizations working in Tanzania
- Raised additional funds and drew in new partners into the Legume Alliance

The Legume Alliance started out by looking at how it could address information flows to smallholder farmers. What was always clear was that tackling information flows alone would not be sufficient to achieve sustainable changes in farming practice.

One of the major issues for bean markets is that the input markets are under-developed. The partners have addressed input supply issues in two ways. First, i-Logix is collecting information on farmer demand for products by bean farmers that can be used by input suppliers to plan input supply. Using databases established through the Listening Post, and other radio programs, Farm Radio International is helping recruit 7,500 smallholder farmers for the pilot information gathering exercise. The long term objective is to create a business whereby companies pay for this information so that demand and supply can be matched. In the short term, the legume alliance is also able to use the information to inform our campaigns. Secondly, funds have been raised to actively intervene in the supply chain for improved seed varieties – both certified and quality declared seed in Tanzania.

Initially eight partners signed up to be part of the Legume Alliance, but more have since joined. ASHC benefited enormously from the experience gained and lessons learned during phase 1 and also from the convening power that being part of CABI brings. Projects and programs often underestimate the time it takes to forge effective partnerships and build trust.

During phase 1, ASHC worked effectively with several organisations who have become Alliance members, including Well Told Story/Shujaaz, SARI, KIT and IITA/ N2Africa, and CABI had an existing relationship with Farm Radio International – all of which helped with the



Partners in Maharage Bingwa



How the Maharage Bingwa campaign will work

establishment stage of the partnership. The fortnightly campaign e-mail newsletter, written and distributed by ASHC, has grown to a circulation of 80 partners just over 3 months from its publication in September.

During phase 1 of ASHC formal monitoring and evaluation (M&E) was weak and ad hoc. The ASHC team however, have spent time reflecting on what worked and what did not and the result of this can be found in the report section of the ASHC website.

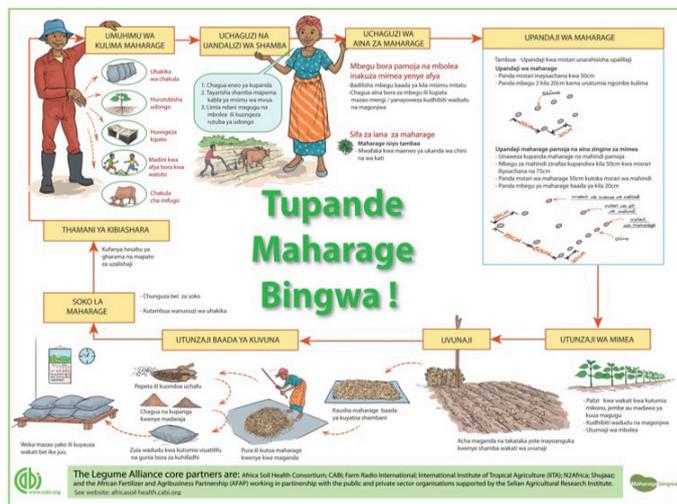
Going forward KIT, the Royal Tropical Institute in the Netherlands, is supporting M&E for the campaign approach by capacity building of the core team with methods, data collection tools and skills. This is important because in phase 2 ASHC is required to provide evidence of impact at scale. The timely production of M&E data, information and analyses will ensure mid-course corrections can be made that should improve impact and outcomes.

The Maharage Bingwa campaign could become a model for future jointly developed and delivered campaigns to help smallholder farming families improve their agricultural practices – both under ASHC phase 2 and beyond. It is also an opportunity to test new approaches to monitoring, learning and evaluation. Collecting these lessons is an essential part of why ASHC received additional investment. If you follow the Legume Alliance blog you can see the lessons as they are formulated.

## Partnership bonus

The Legume Alliance is now actively fund-raising to help to realise the vision for a campaign based approach. The funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is focused on the development of partnerships; the production and implementation of campaign plans; monitoring and evaluation through prototype, pilot and scale-up phases. This means that to realise the campaigns at scale the Legume Alliance had to find other resources.

With an increasing emphasis on partnership, funders have been reassured that the Legume Alliance is already a functioning partnership. CABI and partners have already been successful in securing new fund including: The International Development Research Council is supporting an Farm Radio lead project in partnership with CABI that will integrate with the Legume Alliance to work on two new crops, soybean and groundnuts. Another new project lead by Farm Radio in collaboration with CABI and funded by The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) will support a technology led approach that will see Farm Radio and CABI delivering integrated radio and SMS and voice technology campaigns across a range of staple and cash crops including common beans. This new work will integrate with activities in ASHC and D2F programs.



Point of sale material for use in agrodealer shops