ISSD Africa Community of Practice:

Advancing the Humanitarian, Development and Peace-building Nexus in Africa's Seed Sector

Draft Proposal

Abishkar Subedi, James Mulkerrins, Hans Smolders, Marthe Diallo, Ronnie Vernooy, Arnab Gupta, Andrea Mottram, Abby Love, Louise Sperling and Bastiaan Huesken

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Subedi, A[1]., Mulkerrins, J.[1], Smolders, H.[2], Diallo, M.[2], Vernooy, R.[3], Gupta, A.[1], Mottram, A.[4], Love, A.[4], Sperling, L.[5], Huesken, B[6]. 2023. *ISSD Africa Community of Practice: Advancing the Humanitarian, Development and Peacebuilding Nexus in Africa's Seed Sector. Draft Proposal.* Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation.

[1]Wageningen University & Research – Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation
[2]Royal Topical Institute
[3]Alliance Bioversity & CIAT
[4]Mercy Corps
[5]SeedSystem
[6]International Fertilizer Development Center

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Executive summary

HDP-Nexus for developing the seed sector in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCS)
Across fragile states in Africa, conflict and other protracted crises as well as increasing climate stresses are compounding smallholder farmers' challenges of accessing and using sufficient amounts of high quality, affordable and diversified seed of locally adapted varieties that farmers prefer. The result is lower resilience to continued shocks and stresses, lower farm income, reduced food and nutrition security and commonly, the unsustainable use of agrobiodiversity.

In these complex and challenging contexts, humanitarian, development and peace-building initiatives implement interventions in a disconnected manner, without synergy and often with contradictory objectives.

What is needed to strengthen seed sectors and the farming communities that rely on them, is the development and operationalisation of a nexus approach that enables deeper awareness and understanding, collaborative joint action and complementary investments and activities. This will be the key focus of a new phase of ISSD Africa (2023-2027).

A HDP-focused Community of Practice
The ISSD Africa Community of Practice is an established and reputable platform for the development and exchange of African-grown solutions to complex seed sector bottlenecks on the African continent. In this proposed phase, ISSD Africa will expand its scope and give specific attention to uniting international and African organisations and experts working on humanitarian, development and peace-building interventions in Africa's seed sector.

Action learning projects
ISSD Africa will enable and support the implementation of four distinct, yet highly complementary action learning projects, namely; 1) Resilient & diverse seed systems (led by the Alliance of Bioversity & CIAT and WCDI), 2) Humanitarian seed response in fragile and conflict-affected states (led by Mercy Corps and SeedSystem), 3) Seed business development in fragile contexts (led by Mercy Corps and IFDC) and, 4) Seed governance and peace (led by WCDI and KIT).

In each action learning project, topic teams will be brought together to strategise, design and implement on-the-ground action research, stakeholder workshops and knowledge product development. The action learning projects will be supported by an international coordination unit which will help scale emerging insights and products to new international audiences and fora.

A key element will be the convening of international events that enable the validation of emerging insights, the forging of new connections and partnerships and the integration of ISSD Africa outputs into humanitarian, development and peace-building interventions on seed.

Building on the achievements of previous phases
The previous phase of ISSD Africa (2019-2023) produced many new insights and guiding perspectives. Under the topics of 'Developing the seed sector in fragile states' and 'Effective seed insecurity response' and 'Agrobiodiversity, seeds and climate change' multiple new tools, case studies, reviews and other knowledge products were developed which will be used and further refined and scaled in this proposed phase. Outputs and insights from the other six topics will be explored for adaptation for implementation in the contexts targeted in this phase.

Abbreviations and acronyms

A3Seed	Accelerating Agriculture and Agribusiness in South Sudan
ABC	Alliance Bioversity International & CIAT
ASBP	African Seed and Biotechnology Programme
AUC	African Union Commission
CAT	Context Analysis Tool
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIAT	International Center for Tropical Agriculture
CIP	International Potato Center
CoP	Community of Practice
FCS	Fragile and conflict-affected states
HDP	Humanitarian, Development and Peace-building
HoA	Horn of Africa
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
IFDC	International Fertilizer Development Center
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IITA	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
ISSD	Integrated Seed Sector Development
KIT	Royal Tropical Institute
NARO	National Agricultural Research Organisation (Uganda)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PAC	Programme Advisory Committee
SERT	Seed Emergency Response Tool
SSSA	Seed sector Security Assessment
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
WA	West Africa
WCDI	Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme
WUR	Wageningen University & Research

1 Key information

Programme title	ISSD Africa Community of Practice: Advancing the Humanitarian, Development and Peace-building Nexus in Africa's Seed Sector
Title abbreviated	ISSD Africa 2023 – 2027
Coordination unit	Wageningen University and Research (WUR), Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI), Wageningen, Netherlands Contact person: Abishkar Subedi, abishkar.subedi@wur.nl, +31 317482252
	Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), Amsterdam, Netherlands Contact person: Hans Smolders; Email: h.smolders@kit.nl Tel. +31205688657
Action learning project leads & co-leads	Humanitarian seed response in fragile and conflict-affected states & Seed business development in fragile states Mercy Corps, Edinburgh Contact person: Sandrine Chetail; Email: schetail@mercycorps.org; Tel: +1 5038965000 SeedSystem: Louise Sperling. Email: sperling@seedsystem.org International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC) Bastiaan Huesken. Email: bhuesken@ifdc.org
	Resilient & diverse seed systems Bioversity International, Rome, Italy Contact person: Ronnie Vernooy; Email: r.vernooy@cgiar.org; Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation Arnab Gupta. Email: Arnab.gupta@wur.nl
	Seed governance & peace Wageningen University and Research (WUR), Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI), Wageningen, Netherlands Contact person: Abishkar Subedi. Email: abishkar.subedi@wur.nl, +31 317482252 Royal Tropical Institute Hans Smolders. Email: h.smolders@kit.nl
Geographic location of programme	Horn of Africa and West Africa
Programme duration	4 years (Sept 2023 – Aug 2027)
Requested budget from SDC	1.96 million Euro
Complementary funding from consortium partners	1.96 million Euro

2 Context

Across fragile states in Africa, conflict and other protracted crises as well as increasing climate stresses are compounding smallholder farmers' challenges of accessing and using sufficient amounts of high quality, affordable and diversified seed of locally adapted varieties that farmers prefer. The result is lower resilience to continued shocks and stresses, lower farm income, reduced food and nutrition security and commonly, the unsustainable use of agrobiodiversity.

Seed sectors in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCS) are regularly fragmented and dysfunctional; unable to meet seed demand due to weakened institutional capacities, governance breakdown and market disruption. Yet timely delivered and affordable quality seed[1] is a key input for increasing crop productivity, and experts generally estimate that 50% of the yield gap can be closed through the use of quality seed[2].

The HDP-Nexus in seed sectors
In FCS contexts, multiple actors respond to different challenges and priorities – humanitarian responders strive to meet immediate needs, often following an emergency; development practitioners focus on strengthening resilience and food security; and peace-building actors focus on improving social cohesion amongst divergent groups and addressing the root causes of the conflict. In these contexts, seed interventions are often a part of humanitarian and development responses; seed is a critical component of the overall agricultural system and can yield quick returns for farmers, including for men, women and the most vulnerable.

However, there is often a disconnect between the approaches HDP actors take, particularly in FCS. Humanitarian interventions often weaken seed sectors in the long-term through the displacement of private sector actors, market flooding of inexpensive or free seeds, or bulk purchases of crops or seeds not suitable for the climate or environment. To avoid these pitfalls, consensus is needed amongst humanitarian and development actors and policy makers on what elements make seed sector interventions effective in conflict contexts, and how these interventions might contribute to longer-term peace outcomes. For effective seed response, HDP actors must understand the complexities of conflict contexts and adapt their interventions to the unique challenges and opportunities inherent therein. HDP actors need to agree upon and adopt principles or standards for appropriate seed responses that are timely, targeted, coordinated and that build upon and improve existing systems as well as governance and institutional arrangements, being formal or informal. This is especially critical in shock-prone areas, where needs switch frequently between emergency and development interventions; in these locations emergency interventions need to be linked to and support longer-term seed sector development ambitions.

Find more on this topic in the action learning project proposals for Topic 2: Humanitarian seed response in conflict-affected and fragile states, Topic 3: Seed business development in fragile contexts, and Topic 4: Seed governance and peace.

Resilience to climate shocks and stresses
Particularly in the Horn of Africa and West Africa, erratic and less predictable rainfall, higher temperatures, heat spells, and recurring droughts are predicted to become more frequent. This is leading to a change of cropping seasons and growing cycles and occurrence of new pests and diseases. As a result of these irregularities and uncertainties, farmers can no longer rely on crops and crop varieties that used to do well, with negative impacts on nutrition and food security and the capacity of farmers to withstand shocks.

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[1] Quality seed is viable seed or planting material that germinates well, is free from seed-borne pests and diseases, and is true to type i.e. of the variety expected by the farmer. In the informal seed systems quality seed has only been subjected to the seed producers' internal procedures of quality control. In the intermediary and the formal seed systems internal quality control procedures of the seed producers are supplemented with external quality assurance, including seed certification and decentralized mechanisms like quality declared seed. Both seed of local varieties and improved varieties may be of quality.

[2] World Bank, 2007. World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development. The World Bank, Washington DC.

Climate change impacts are exacerbating the devastating impact of conflict and war, resulting in loss of lives, destruction of goods and livelihoods, and massive displacement of people inside countries and across borders. Farmer communities in protracted crisis situations are particularly vulnerable because they do not have resilient seed sectors that provide affordable, diverse and good quality seed/seedlings of staple crops, minor crops, vegetables, and forage species (important for feeding their livestock) in a timely manner. They also have difficulties accessing suitable farm inputs, such as agronomic knowledge, fertilizers, tools; creating income generation options (e.g., sale of fresh or processed produce); and finding efficient marketing channels. External interventions, as organized by development and humanitarian agencies, do not always sustainably respond to farmer and community needs or interests; an example is supply of emergency seed of varieties that are not adapted or fail to germinate in particular local agroecological conditions.

Find more on this topic in the action learning project proposal for Topic 1: Resilient and diverse seed systems.

Integrated Seed Sector Development (ISSD)
The ISSD approach supports the establishment of seed sectors that are tailored to national realities. ISSD recognizes the value of formal, intermediary and informal seed sectors and in doing so, it steps away from a one-size-fits-all approach to seed sector design and function, and cherishes the diversity of systems and pathways by which seed of different crops is produced, exchanged, and used for and by farmers with different needs.

The ultimate goal of ISSD is to enhance reliable access of male and female smallholder farmers to sufficient quantities of quality seed of desired varieties at an affordable price. ISSD strives to increase farmers' choice in terms of crop varieties, seed quality, price and market outlets, to cater for the diversity of needs of African farmers.

To improve seed sector performance, ISSD aims for the development of local solutions, based on local piloting and innovation. It builds on the existing diversity of formal, intermediary and informal pathways by which seed is produced, exchanged and marketed. The key principle is that each of these existing pathways has its inherent strengths and opportunities for improvement in delivering quality seed to farmers. ISSD promotes seed sector entrepreneurship where possible, but recognises the importance of public investment in seed sector functioning. ISSD seeks for a functional balance between public and private efforts in the seed sector.

ISSD Africa: an international community of practice on seed
ISSD Africa unites international seed sector practitioners around the common objective to improve seed sector interventions, policies and practices in Africa. This is done with the goal in mind of increasing farmers' access to the quality seed they prefer. The main instrument of ISSD Africa is learning and communicating 'what works in seed sector development under what conditions'. As a community of practice, ISSD Africa discusses the quality of seed sector interventions at continental and national level, aiming to accelerate the transformation required to provide inclusive access to high quality seed of both local and improved varieties sustainably. ISSD Africa unites practitioners that collectively have the capacity to experiment with, explore and ultimately overcome complex challenges that they encounter in seed sector development.

In this proposed phase of ISSD Africa (2023-2027), new specific attention is given to those organisations and practitioners working to support seed sectors through humanitarian and peace-building initiatives. The CoP, by focusing on the HDP-Nexus, will build connections and seek synergy with these actors and the diverse and complex contexts in which they operate.

This document

This proposal outlines how the ISSD Africa Community of Practice will enable action learning, partnership building and the identification and dissemination of African-grown solutions specifically for developing the seed sector in FCS.

The proposal elaborates four distinct yet complementary action learning projects, namely; 1) Resilient & diverse seed systems, 2) Humanitarian seed response in fragile and conflict-affected states, 3) Seed business development in fragile contexts and, 4) Seed governance and peace.

This section briefly presented the new context in which this phase of ISSD Africa aims to operate. Section 3 presents our ambition to build on the achievements and lessons learned of previous phases, in particular that of the last phase (2019-2023). Section 4 presents the programme's results framework, detailing the ambition, goal and targeted outcomes of the programme. Sections 5 and 6 present how ISSD Africa will be organised, structured and administered. Section 7 provides an overview of the programme's budget and budgetary conditions. Section 8 describes the particular contextual and operational risks the programme must be prepared to deal with and the mitigation strategies to do so. Section 9 outlines the approach for monitoring and evaluating the programme's progress and impact. Specific proposals for the action learning projects can be found in the annexes.

3 Building on achievements and lessons learnt

ISSD Africa 2019-2023

For a summary of earlier phases of ISSD Africa see here

A dynamic and inclusive Community of Practice
The previous phase saw ISSD Africa established as a Community of Practice (CoP). The rationale to build a CoP was to create an open and inclusive platform through which organisations and professionals working on seed in Africa could access knowledge, make connections with peers and be connected to wider continental-level innovations and processes.

The CoP enabled actors to be partners, to participate and contribute to the programme's activities. With high attendance at events and a near 1,000 strong mailing list, the approach has been validated, with many partners appreciating the access they have and ability to contribute. The CoP approach carried through to the formulation of events which focused on interactive methodologies that require active participation and experience sharing. At the synthesis conference in 2022, *partners reflected on this important value of ISSD Africa.*

New insights on 8 important topics
The ISSD Africa CoP was built around eight distinct action learning topic teams, with each topic being led by a partner organisation who facilitated a team of African and international partners to collaborate on action research activities (Table 1).

Table 1   *Lead organizations for the thematic projects (2019-2023)*

Lead organization	Thematic projects
Mercy Corps	Developing the seed sector in fragile states Effective seed insecurity response
Alliance Bioversity & CIAT	Agrobiodiversity, seeds and climate change
IFPRI	Enabling seed policies
CIP/IITA	Enhancing seed quality assurance
ICRISAT	Business models for early generation seed
WCDI	Creating demand for quality seed
IFPRI	Gender dynamics in seed systems

Aside from action research activities, topic leads and partners collaborated effectively to deliver a diverse and high-quality repertoire of knowledge products, ranging from reports, guidelines and briefs, to videos, interactive tools and case studies. A major achievement was to maintain momentum and adapt to the restrictions that arose from the Coronavirus pandemic. This saw many activities move from the field to the desk; yet the outputs have been well-received and taken-up.

Convening power of ISSD Africa
Restrictions around the coronavirus pandemic impacted ISSD Africa's planning for in-person events; a cornerstone of the ISSD Africa approach and what network partners most value from ISSD Africa. Rather, most events took place online and although valued, were less enjoyable and far less interactive. Despite these restrictions, ISSD Africa was able to deliver on an interactive kick-off workshop, three national policy dialogues in Kenya, Nigeria and South Sudan and a large synthesis conference in Kigali in 2022.

What the events – both online and in-person – confirmed, is the trust that stakeholders working on seed sector transformation award to ISSD Africa. The CoP is valued as a collaborative and inclusive space in which to share experiences, learn new options and solutions and challenge existing narratives.

3rd Communiqué on ISSD in Africa

The result of the synthesis conference was the 3rd Communiqué on ISSD in Africa and eight accompanying briefs which unpacked the Communiqué's contents and mission. The Communiqué presents new insights and perspectives for advancing seed sector transformation in Africa and is built around five distinct ambitions, namely; 1) Food security & nutrition, 2) Equity & inclusion, 3) Competitiveness, 4) Climate change adaptation, and 5) Resilience to shocks & stresses. The Communiqué has been endorsed by the African Union – African Seed and Biotechnology Programme and many stakeholders working on seed sector interventions in Africa. It is accepted as a key guiding document for future collaboration on seed sector development investments.

The insights and perspectives presented in the Communiqué and Briefs have been considered in shaping the activities for this proposed phase of ISSD Africa. The activities proposed align particularly with the insights presented for Ambition 5: Resilience to Shocks & Stresses.

Effective support to action learning projects

The topic teams were supported by a coordination unit (WCDI & KIT). The pandemic prevented the establishment of an African support unit which we felt could facilitate effective online engagement. The coordination and support offered to the action research teams was welcomed, confirming the structure as useful to allow topic teams to focus on technical activities. The coordination unit led event organisation, knowledge product development and communication activities, ensuring that the right products reached the appropriate audiences.

A key reflection to take forward is the need for stronger cross-topic collaboration and learning. While the coordination unit in the last phase facilitated a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), this remained mostly relevant for operational sharing and planning. More emphases is needed on learning and joint agenda-setting across topics. This will be key to support complementarity, find efficiency gains and for the development of a shared language and approach on dealing with interrelated topics. To support this, the proposed phase will have both an operations-focused technical committee, but also a programmatic advisory committee.

Supporting seed sector partnerships

Basing the action research of the ISSD Africa CoP around eight distinct topics and topic teams enabled ISSD Africa to support the building and advancing of partnerships between diverse actors. Encouraging partners to work collaboratively, as well as pro-actively seeking to invite different types of partners - working in different contexts and countries - to ISSD Africa events, allowed for new connections and relationships to be made, for insights to be tested, validated and contextualised to meet the needs of partners and their programmes.

From the outset, ISSD Africa sought complementarity with existing and under-development seed sector initiatives. Alignment was sought with national development programmes, including the Ethiopia-Netherlands Seed Partnership, the Collaborative Seed Programme in Nigeria, the Integrated Seed Sector Development Programmes in the Sahel (ISSD Sahel) and Uganda (ISSD Uganda), A3Seed in South Sudan and PSSD Burundi. Further bridges were built with pan-African initiatives including the African Seed and Biotechnology Programme of the African Union, the NWO-WOTRO programme on Seed Systems Development, and CGIAR Initiatives including the Community of Excellence on Seed Systems, the new SeedEqual Initiative and the Initiative on Nature Positive Solutions. The proposed new phase of ISSD Africa will carry on the ambition to build and facilitate partnership; now with an emphasis on building connection with those HDP actors focused on seed.

Learning on seed insecurity in fragile contexts

The previous phase saw specific attention to seed sector issues in FCS. Two topics led by Mercy Corps (with strong input from SeedSystem), namely; 1) Developing the seed sector in fragile states, and 2) Effective seed insecurity response, gave impetus to researching and innovating on the interplay between humanitarian seed response and seed sector development. Strong collaboration and co-creation within the topic delivered a package of key knowledge-focused resources. These include the Context Analysis Tool (CAT), the Seed Emergency Response Tool (SERT), the 10 Guiding Principles for Good Seed Aid Practice, a package of case studies on last mile seed production and distribution in fragile contexts and many more. These resources were developed and tested as part of a consultative programme of webinars, in-person workshops and conference sessions.

Similar advancements were made under Topic 3: Agrobiodiversity, seeds and climate change, led by the Alliance of Bioversity & CIAT. Under this topic, great progress was achieved in advancing the agenda on farmer-managed seed systems and the need to strengthen community seed banking. This is seen as key for ensuring varietal diversity, particularly in times of stress due to conflict and/or climate change impacts.

Specific attention for Francophone Africa

A noted shortcoming in the previous phase was the attention to providing events and knowledge products adapted/translated for use by partners in francophone countries. The reasons for this were language capacity at WCDI and topic leads as well as an imbalance in complementarity with East and Southern African programmes and partners. It's also noted that live-interpretation does not fit well with the interactive nature of ISSD Africa events.

While some francophone partners attended online and in-person events, and there was a Francophone synthesis event in Burkina Faso in February 2023, this is deemed as insufficient. More importantly, the prevailing and diverse seed sector challenges found in francophone West Africa, have not been given adequate support. In the proposed phase KIT will fulfil the role of West Africa coordinator, aiming to ensure issues and partners from the region are given necessary encouragement, support and opportunity.

Scaling achievements from the previous phase

A key ambition of the proposed new phase will be to scale and build on the achievements and lessons outlined above. The CoP is in a strong place, with a strong mandate to convene and support knowledge-focused seed sector interventions. Although the focus of this phase will be on fragile contexts in which the HDP-Nexus is of particular relevance, the CoP will still maintain active support and communication to the wider network of African seed professionals.

The proposed new phase offers the opportunity to directly build on the outputs of topics led by Mercy Corps and Alliance Bioversity & CIAT, but also the opportunity to contextualise, test and apply, the outputs of the other topics of the previous phase, including but not limited to modalities for decentralising seed quality assurance, mechanisms such as the Champion Farmer model to support women farmers' increased access to seed and related services and capacity building on good agricultural practices to strengthen the demand for quality seed.

4 Results framework

Results framework

The ISSD Africa interventions are structured according to three levels of attribution and contribution: the project impact or sphere of interest; the project goal or sphere of influence; and the project results (outputs and outcomes) or sphere of control. Figure 1 displays a diagram of the results framework. A complete measurement framework with targets and indicators for outcomes and outputs, and activities is presented in Annex 1.

It is important to distinguish between the results framework of ISSD Africa overall, and the results framework of associated thematic projects. Below the results framework of ISSD Africa is presented. In addition, all projects associated to ISSD Africa have their own results framework with associated impact, outcomes, outputs and activities. Find these in the topic-specific annexes.

Impact	**Smallholder farmers in fragile and conflicted-affected states (FCS) have improved access to sufficient, high quality, affordable, diversified seed of locally adapted varieties farmers prefer resulting in increased resilience, higher farm income, improved food and nutrition security and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity.**		
Goal	**An international community of practice comprising humanitarian, development and peace stakeholders supports and steers sustainable seed sector interventions in fragile and conflict-affected states in Africa.**		
	Operation & facilitation by ISSD Africa Coordination	**Implementation of action learning projects**	**Integration & sharing of insights**
Outcomes	**1.** Enabling structure for the effective facilitation of the CoP is operational and tailored to support the HDP-Nexus	**2.** Africa-grown solutions to boost the HDP-Nexus in seed sectors developed	**3.** Integration of ISSD Africa derived insights in HDP seed sector interventions and policies supported
Outputs	**1.1** International coordination unit and African support units operational	**2.1** Partnerships for action learning projects strengthened	**3.1** ISSD Africa communication channels actively used to share information and expertise
	1.2 Technical and programmatic advisory committees operational	**2.2** Action learning projects implemented	**3.2** International ISSD Africa meetings facilitated
	1.3 Action learning projects supported	**2.3** ISSD Africa publications developed	**3.3** ISSD Africa international policy dialogues facilitated

Figure 1   *Results chain of the ISSD Africa community of practice*

Impact

Smallholder farmers in fragile and conflicted-affected states (FCS) have improved access to sufficient, high quality, affordable, diversified seed of locally adapted varieties farmers prefer resulting in increased resilience, higher farm income, improved food and nutrition security and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity.

In many fragile states and contexts, the users of seed, namely women and men smallholder farmers and their communities are the groups most vulnerable to the fragility related to conflict and climate stresses. ISSD Africa's action learning projects and knowledge-focused activities will develop and scale solutions that enable these groups to access and benefit from sufficient, high quality, affordable seed of a range of different crops and varieties, either local varieties, farmers varieties/landraces or improved varieties, adapted to their needs and farming systems and the local context and to market and consumer demands.

Through linking with partner programmes and wider initiatives from local to continental levels, ISSD Africa will contribute to smallholder farmers' livelihoods, contributing to improved household food security and nutrition and an improved farm-derived income. With a focus crop diversity and building local capacities and resilience, ISSD Africa will contribute to the maintenance of, and functional access to, biodiversity. This is of essential importance for the sustainable use of natural resources and giving farmers sufficient choice during times of fragility and stresses.

Goal
An international community of practice comprising humanitarian, development and peace stakeholders supports and steers sustainable seed sector interventions in fragile and conflict-affected states in Africa.

The previous phase of ISSD Africa delivered a functional and reputable Community of Practice on seed sector transformation in Africa. The goal of this phase is to not only preserve this CoP, but to diversify and expand its topical and membership reach to account for the complex realities that exist in FCS in Africa. Doing so brings new partners, issues and realities on which much alignment and new knowledge is needed. ISSD Africa strives to use the CoP as a place for connection, learning and integration.

As an umbrella for four distinct action learning projects and an array of complementary initiatives, the ISSD Africa CoP will serve as a testbed to develop the concept of the HDP-Nexus in seed sectors interventions. The CoP will support the design and implementation of action learning activities and lead their transnational dissemination.

At the end of the programme, ISSD Africa will be an accepted and valued space not just for seed development practitioners, but also for humanitarian and peace practitioners who prioritise seed sector transformation in Africa as an essential pathway for continental agricultural development.

Project outcomes and outputs
We foresee three outcomes, operating at three different levels:

Outcome 1: Enabling structure for the effective facilitation of the CoP operational and tailored to support the HDP-Nexus.

The following outputs will contribute to the realisation of the outcome:

1.1 *International coordination unit and African support unit operational*
The international coordination unit is the main vehicle for facilitating and aligning progress across the action learning projects in ISSD Africa. WCDI will manage the coordination unit with support from KIT for coordinating activities in francophone West Africa. The coordination unit will lead the organisation and implementation of transnational activities and in particular international and online events.

It remains the ambition to operationalise a dedicated African support unit although this cannot take place until project initiation. Until this happens, KIT staff based in Mali and a consultant based in the University Juba will help facilitate on-the-ground engagement in West Africa and the Horn of Africa respectively.

1.2 *Technical and programmatic advisory committees operational (TAC & PAC)*
The TAC is comprised of the coordination unit and topic leads/co-leads. Its responsibility is to guide the general direction and progress of action learning projects and CoP-level activities. Meeting at least twice per project year, the TAC will help to operationalise the concept of HDP-Nexus in seed and ensure that ISSD Africa's performance meets expectations.

The PAC is a new structural element for ISSD Africa. Its goal is to further support the TAC in cross-topic learning while strategically linking ISSD Africa to partner initiatives and emerging trends on African seed sector development. It will be comprised of TAC representatives and resourced external senior experts from complimentary initiatives and strategically placed organisations. Meeting twice per project year, the PAC will provide recommendations on improved performance and new opportunities for the CoP to explore.

1.3 *Action learning projects supported*

Together, the coordination unit, the TAC and the PAC will support action learning projects. Resources will be made available to support the identification, organisation and implementation of events and the development and synergy of action learning outputs. Specific attention – arising from feedback from the previous phase – will be given to supporting enhanced cross-topic alignment and learning. Topic teams implementing action learning projects will be encouraged and supported to elaborate on the concept of HDP-Nexus and their learning on how this functions operationally will be elevated and promoted to new audiences.

Outcome 2. Africa-grown solutions to advance the HDP-Nexus in seed sectors developed.

The following outputs will contribute to the realisation of the outcome:

2.1 *Partnerships for action learning projects strengthened*

A key ambition for ISSD Africa, as with all programmes based on the ISSD approach, is to build and support increased collaboration and partnerships. Each action learning project is implemented by a number of organisations, with some in lead/co-lead roles and some in topic team roles. Partners will work collaboratively to achieve their targeted outcomes and with support from the coordination unit, partners will be encouraged and supported to deepen their connection and relationships. Through the hosting of international and online events, CoP members have the opportunity to meet and form new relationships with organisations working to address similar challenges in different contexts.

By focusing on the HDP-Nexus, ISSD Africa will provide a platform for diverse organisations working on different entry points to seed; humanitarian, development and peace-building interventions in seed. ISSD Africa will be the first platform to pro-actively bring these organisations together in a structured and longer-term fashion. In particular, the addition of peacebuilding to the seed agenda will bring for many, the first connection and partnership with organisations working directly on peace.

2.2 *Action learning projects implemented*

The four action learning projects of ISSD Africa enable deep engagement with African partners in at least eight countries across the Horn of Africa and West Africa. ISSD Africa brings additionality to an array of complementary programmes with direct activities in national seed sectors. The result of this approach is that African partners and CoP members are empowered and supported to inform and validate the repertoire of proposed knowledge products and learning outcomes. Across the projects, multiple inclusive national-level workshops and consultative processes will deliver new reviews, assessments, tools, case studies and media. End-of-project synthesis papers will give impetus for the design of future initiatives, policies and regulations.

2.3 *ISSD Africa publications developed*

Under each action learning topic, partners are proposing a diverse and considerable array of publications and knowledge products. ISSD Africa publications are geared at improving the knowledge and skill-set of practitioners as well as providing options for policy-makers and regulators. The current literature and repository of publications on seed sector development will benefit from a new range of publications specifically on the HDP-Nexus and its implications for action.

Outcome 3: Integration of ISSD Africa derived insights in HDP seed sector interventions and policies supported.

The following outputs will contribute to the realisation of the outcome:

3.1 *ISSD Africa communication channels actively used to share information and expertise*
In support of the action learning projects, ISSD Africa will ensure that publications, event invitations and opportunities to connect and learn are spread far and reach those with a knowledge need and/or a mandate to implement new knowledge.

The primary means of communication are the website (www.issdafrica.org), digital newsletter and LinkedIn profile. The website is a trusted resource for accessing ISSD Africa outputs as well as those relevant outputs from partners and beyond. CoP members are encouraged to share their own knowledge outputs via the website. The digital newsletter is shared at least three times per year, excluding specific reminders on events. The mailing list is currently over 900 although a new strategy will be needed for tailoring to specific interests on HDP-Nexus content.

Further, ISSD Africa actively links with relevant additional communication networks/channels to further promote the programme's insights and outputs.

3.2 *International ISSD Africa meetings facilitated*
ISSD Africa is perhaps best-known for facilitating larger scale international events. The coronavirus pandemic severely impacted gatherings in the previous phase, however this in-part resulted in high demand to attend the Synthesis Conference in Kigali. This event confirmed the demand for and value of face-to-face engagement. At least three larger international events are planned for this phase; one international Kick-off workshop and two international Synthesis workshops (one FR and one EN). In agreement with complementary initiatives, scope will be sought for a mid-term gathering if this is deemed relevant by action learning topic teams.

3.3 *ISSD Africa international policy dialogues facilitated*
Various dialogues with implications for policy development are planned in the action learning projects. While these are targeted at national level, ISSD Africa will support participation by international participants from neighbouring regional countries. Policy dialogues are specifically useful to support the adaptation and validation of insights into relevant policy options. Further, supporting participation brings practitioners into closer contact with policy-makers and regulators, which they normally may not have. This builds their understanding and capacity to provide knowledge tailored for policy realities. For this output we target two policy dialogues to take place in the third or fourth year of the project.

5 Project structure and approach

Set-up and approach of ISSD Africa

As with the previous phase of ISSD Africa, our aim is to maintain an active international Community of Practice that ensures visibility and contribution of all partners. The set-up of the programme is geared to enable topic teams to conduct action research activities in a manner that efficiently allows them to focus on technical expertise in their action research. This is achieved by direct support and guidance from a coordination unit. The coordination unit will continue to advise on and lead the organisation of international convenings; online and face-to-face, thereby fulfilling its purpose to add reach and value for topical insights. The coordination unit will continue to advise and support (leading if necessary) on key knowledge product development.

Figure 2 outlines the set-up of ISSD Africa, adapted for this new proposed phase. The major difference is the key role of the Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) which is explained below.
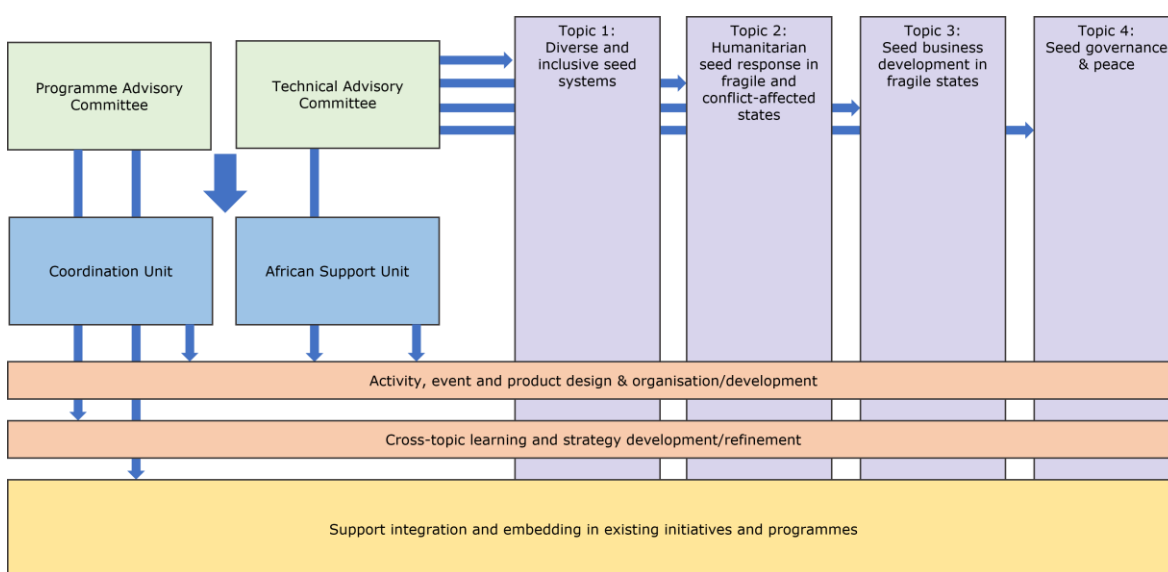

Figure 2 *ISSD Africa set-up*

Coordination unit

The coordination unit will work in collaboration with topic leads and co-leads in shaping and learning from the various activities. Due to the ambition to give more attention and involvement to Francophone African countries, a specific sub-unit will coordinate activities in West African countries. Specific emphasis will, in this phase, be given to enhanced cross-topic learning and more intensive collaboration. To achieve this, there will now be two supporting bodies (TAC & PAC) through which the coordination unit will advance the programme's objectives.

The Technical Advisory Committee

As in the previous phase, the TAC will play a key role in collaboration and sharing progress on the different topics as well as ensuring alignment at the programme level. Particularly for event planning, knowledge product formulation and reporting purposes, the TAC has proven useful and will therefore be maintained. It is comprised only of topic leads/co-leads and the coordination unit. The TAC intends to meet minimum twice per year, with additional kick-off, mid-term and closing meetings.

The Programme Advisory Committee

New in this proposed phase of ISSD Africa is the 'PAC'. The PAC will offer strategic direction to ISSD Africa, bringing expanded technical seed sector expertise and wider networks to further embedding of ISSD Africa into other African seed initiatives. The PAC will be comprised not just of topic leads and the coordination unit, but also a pool of strategically placed and well-connected experts and a representative of SDC. Naturally, emphasis will be placed on identifying African partners to fill this role.

African support unit

It remains the ambition for ISSD Africa to be further embedded in African institutions. It is preferable that there is an operational African support unit for ISSD Africa that can support the organisation of events and provide logistical support to regional action research activities. However, with a condensed proposal development phase, it has not been possible to identify the appropriate African partner to fulfil this role. This can only happen after the confirmation of topic team composition and action research project selection. It may also be an outcome that no African support unit can be found. Confirmation of this ambition will take place at the end of the first project year.

Action learning projects

The heart of ISSD Africa are the action learning projects. The action learning projects build upon ongoing projects and programmes of the partners, convening and facilitating the learning on a specific topic, based on strategically chosen cases. The ISSD Africa structure recognizes the intellectual ownership and management authority of those in the lead of specific projects or coalitions, knowing that project leads and partners often have been investing in specific topics already over considerable time. They are recognized leaders in these fields. They act as topic leads and co-leads with a mandate to facilitate a topic team of relevant, motivated and recognised partners. Inside the topic teams, partners will work to unpack the research questions as formulated by topic leads and explore which current programmes and contexts are suitable testbeds to gain insights. The specific selection of these action research activities and confirmation of topic team partners can only happen after the initiation of this proposed new phase.

6 Organisation, management and administration

6.1 Organisational structure and roles, tasks and responsibilities
The ISSD Africa community of practice follows the structure and approach explained in Chapter 5. Find below a summary of the roles, tasks and responsibilities of different units operating under ISSD Africa.

Roles and responsibilities of coordination unit
- Coordinates the successful implementation of the CoP
- Prepares and facilitates face-to-face and virtual network events and exchange
- Facilitates the documentation and communication of experiences and lessons learned
- Provides or procures training and coaching where requested
- Ensures linkage and synergies between individual projects on operational level
- Coordinates the meetings of the technical advisory committee and the programme advisory committee
- Coordinates resource mobilisation
- Liaises with other international agricultural development initiatives
- Liaises and communicates with ISSD Africa funders
- Controls and manages the programme administratively
- Monitors and evaluates projects' progress

Roles and responsibilities of African support unit (once identified)
- Provides logistical support to the organisation of international meetings and, upon specific request, national events
- Provides secretarial services based on the tasks at hand
- Liaises with other international agricultural development initiatives, based on opportunity
- Represents ISSD Africa during international agricultural development events, according to need

Roles and responsibilities of the programme advisory committee (once formulated)
- Meet twice per project year
- Supports strategic linkages with existing programmes, initiatives and networks
- Links with the AUC ASBP
- Support cross-topic, higher-level learning and reflection
- Discuss strategic opportunities for impact and exposure of ISSD Africa
- Mobilise additional resources to secure sustainability of the ISSD Africa CoP as relevant

Roles and responsibilities of the technical advisory committee
- Meet minimum twice per project year
- Support cross-topic learning and leverage synergies
- Identify opportunities for alignment of knowledge products and input to international event organisation and development
- Communication of progress updates and emerging challenges to workplans
- Resolve problems and conflicts

Roles and responsibilities of project leads & co-leads
- Coordinates the implementation of the individual action learning project
- Manages the project partnership
- Prepares and administers sub-contract agreements if so required
- Contributes to ISSD Africa events and is an ambassador of the ISSD Africa CoP
- Reports progress to the ISSD Africa CoP
- Co-publishes results with the ISSD Africa CoP
- Acts as project representative in TAC & PAC
- Principally accountable for project outputs and outcomes, including M&E and budgeting of topic activities

6.2 Key organisations leading ISSD Africa

Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI)
WCDI is the international expertise and capacity building business unit of Wageningen University & Research. WCDI have a long and extensive track record in seed sector development programmes and are the main originator and implementer of the ISSD approach. WCDI have led ISSD Africa since inception in 2011. ISSD Africa is a central element of WCDI's seed portfolio, serving as a platform to reinforce, inform and scale learning in existing and new programmes and professional education activities.

For this phase of ISSD Africa, WCDI staff Abishkar Subedi will coordination the programme. Abishkar is a Senior Seed Systems Advisor with deep experience in leading seed programmes and trainings in Africa and South Asia. Abishkar will be supported by James Mulkerrins, a Knowledge Co-creation and Learning Advisor. James has worked extensively in ISSD Ethiopia and has been an ISSD Africa network facilitator since 2017. James will act as co-lead for this phase of ISSD Africa.

Royal Tropical Institute (KIT)
KIT are a trusted knowledge partner working with the ISSD approach for a long number of years in multiple countries and programmes. KIT played the role of co-coordinator in the previous phase of ISSD Africa as well as providing direct support to action learning projects, most notable that on Early Generation Seed. KIT play leading roles in complementary programmes ISSD Sahel and A3Seed.

For this phase of ISSD Africa, KIT staff Marthe Diallo and Hans Smolders will play key roles. Marthe will support coordination of the programmes activities in francophone West Africa. Marthe has been connected to ISSD Africa since 2011. Hans will act as co-lead for Topic 4 on Governance & Peace. Hans has valuable experience with governance and policy processes related to agricultural systems development.

Alliance Bioversity & CIAT (ABC)
The Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT operates under the CGIAR as a global research-for-development organization delivering scientific evidence, management practices and policy options to use and safeguard agricultural biodiversity to attain global food and nutrition security. The Alliance works with partners in low-income countries in different regions where agricultural biodiversity can contribute to improved nutrition, resilience, productivity and climate change adaptation. The topic of 'Diverse and resilient seed systems' fully aligns with its mandate, interest and experience. The Alliance co-coordinator, Ronnie Vernooy is a seed systems expert with a trajectory of international development research and capacity building of more than 30 years.

Mercy Corps
Mercy Corps exists to alleviate poverty, suffering and oppression, and help people build secure, productive, and just communities. Mercy Corps a multi-mandate organisation that provides access to humanitarian aid, development, and peace assistance in places affected by fragility and crisis. Under the previous ISSD Africa phase, Mercy Corps led two of the eight action learning topics, 1) Developing the seed sector in fragile states, and; 2) Effective seed insecurity response. The work conducted under these two topics – in close collaboration with SeedSystem – will be directly built upon and scaled under the new ISSD Africa phase, positioning Mercy Corps well to elaborate on the research, stakeholder engagements and connections developed under the first phase.

SeedSystem
SeedSystem has been working in the emergency seed response field for over 25 years. Their work focuses on: a) helping stakeholders understand the effects of high stress on seed systems; b) developing tools to effect better assessments and responses; c) influencing policy guidelines; and d) training practitioners in better practice. In ISSD Africa, SeedSystem will be represented by Louise Sperling. Louise is a key originator of Seed sector Security Assessments (SSSAs) as well as a leading author on key deliverables from the previous phase of ISSD Africa, namely; the Seed Emergency Response Tool (SERT), the Context Analysis Tool (CAT) and the 10 Guiding Principles of Good Seed Aid Practice.

International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC)
IFDC is a leading implementer of seed sector development projects in Africa. IFDC currently lead multiple Netherlands-funded private seed sector development projects in Mali & Niger (ISSD Sahel), South Sudan (A3Seed) and Burundi (PSSD Burundi). The projects focus on creating sustainable seed businesses that enable smallholder farmers to access high quality seeds in the desired quantity and at the right time. Local and regional private sector-led seed businesses are central to the IFDC approach. Sustainability derives from creating businesses that are capable of producing high quality seed and delivering valuable private sector-led extension and other support services to farmers. IFDC has developed a bespoke strategy to support seed businesses to reach farmers through the last mile and create an interesting value proposition to stimulate sustainable market demand.

7 Budget

In Table 2 below, you can find the budget overview table. This simplified format has been agreed with SDC.

Notes and conditions on the budget:

1. The budget table is described in EUROs and outlines how the €1.96 million Euros of proposed SDC funding will be distributed on cost item level for each year. These costs are linked to specific activities in the individual topic proposals; see annexes.

2. The budget table is described according to the four programme topics and two coordination units; one dealing with overall programme coordination and that of the Horn of Africa and one section for West Africa coordination.

3. The budget shows the estimated distribution of the funds over the three outcomes of the ISSD Africa community of practice. Note that approx. 80% of the budget will be spent on outcome 2, which is related to the implementation of the action learning projects.

4. Complementary funding:
   a. Partners have been asked to ensure that in total, complementary funding should at least equal the SDC funding contribution.
   b. Sources of complementary funding are indicated in the overview in Annex 2.
   c. Partners have outlined €1.96 million Euros of complementary funding. Just under one million Euros of this total is sourced from the Ethiopia-Netherlands Seed Partnership (ENSP+). The programme is scheduled to initiate on January 1, 2024 and is funded by The Government of the Netherlands and the European Union.
   d. As agreed with SDC, on the budget overview table, we show the total amount of complementary funding that partners have designated. Find the overview of complementary funding in Annex 2.

5. Annual financial auditing:
   a. As agreed with SDC, financial auditing will take place annually. Consortium partners WCDI, Mercy Corps and Alliance Bioversity & CIAT will complete annual financial audits.
   b. Consortium partner KIT will not, as confirmed by SDC, have to complete an annual financial audit. This is due to the proportionally lower amount of SDC funds utilised by KIT. KIT will still provide financial reports from their own internal control system, with any discrepancies accounted for in the report of factual findings.
   c. WCDI lead the coordination unit and Topic 4. The costs for WCDI's financial auditing are described under the coordination unit.
   d. The coordinator will consolidate the consortium partners reports and will send the consolidate report including the audit reports to SDC.

6. On the request of SDC, topics and coordination unit will strive to utilise EUR€400k of SDC funds in 2023. This implies a particularly ambitious beginning to the programme and may create the perception of an imbalance in activities for project year one. WCDI will monitor the achievement of this target and report to SDC toward end-2023.

7. The funds for the action learning/thematic projects will be made available to the consortium partners, who will fund the different activities as agreed upon in the action plan for the project.

8. The budget includes a large investment in the international Kick-Off workshop for 2023. For this event, we also will draw on additional complementary funding. The budget does not include any resource allocation for the international Synthesis workshops; one for anglophone Horn of Africa and one for francophone West Africa. Additional funding will be sought from complementary programmes and/or new programmes/funding between now and 2027.

9. Other costs:

   a. As of the date of submission, there remains an open question around how partners Alliance Bioversity & CIAT and Mercy Corps can describe their institutional overhead costs (which Mercy Corps call ICR). Currently, these costs are described under "Other costs". SDC will provide an answer as to how these costs can be properly described.

10. Personnel costs:

Consortium partners WCDI and KIT both use integrated staff fees. Find here the explanation of these fees:

   a. The KIT calculation method incorporates indirect Knowledge Unit costs towards the hourly rate. For this, KIT use a percentage based allocation model. The basis for the calculation of the external rates is the total budget of the Knowledge Unit for the coming year. No margin for profit is added. The total costs of the Knowledge Unit consist of: The budgeted personnel costs: (Gross salary; Social security charges; Pensions;). The budgeted overhead: (The general overhead distributed via the cost allocation model; The other operational costs of the Knowledge Unit.)
   b. WCDI: As in the previous phase, WCDI use their own full costs fees that are bases on the yearly audited integral costs system (IKS).

Consortium partners Alliance and Mercy Corps use their actual personnel costs including benefits. In line with point 9 on 'Other costs', SDC is yet to confirm how these costs can best be described in the budget. The outcome of that decision may yield implications for the design of the programme.

Table 2   *Budget summary in Euros*

Item		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Topic 1: Resilient & diverse seed systems						
1.1	Personnel costs	31,115.32	32,088.34	33,048.23	41,746.62	137,998.51
1.2	Sub-contracting/consultants costs	20,000.00	22,500.00	20,000.00	15,000.00	77,500.00
1.3	Travel & lodging costs	7,000.00	22,000.00	7,000.00	22,000.00	58,000.00
1.4	Publication and dissemination costs	5,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00	8,837.13	19,837.13
1.5	Other costs	9,674.27	12,472.01	9,548.84	13,749.24	45,444.36
1.6	Financial audit costs	2,805.00	2,805.00	2,805.00	2,805.00	11,220.00
	SUB-TOTAL	75,594.59	94,865.35	75,402.07	104,137.99	**350,000.00**
Topic 2: Humanitarian seed response						
2.1	Personnel costs	51,938.00	58,926.00	49,029.00	38,244.00	198,137.00
2.2	Sub-contracting/consultants costs	21,459.00	22,698.00	16,209.00	15,347.00	75,713.00
2.3	Travel & lodging costs	7,152.00	4,445.00	4,552.00	8,134.00	24,283.00
2.4	Publication and dissemination costs	13,303.00	12,000.00	8,500.00	8,500.00	42,303.00
2.5	Other costs	13,405.60	10,306.90	8,329.00	7,522.50	39,564.00
2.6	Financial audit costs	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	20,000.00
	SUB-TOTAL	112,257.60	113,375.90	91,619.00	82,747.50	**400,000.00**
Topic 3: Seed business development in fragile states						
3.1	Personnel costs	51,932.00	58,926.00	73,539.00	57,362.00	241,759.00
3.2	Sub-contracting/consultants costs	6,051.00	6,522.00	4,881.00	4,647.00	22,101.00
3.3	Travel & lodging costs	7,152.00	4,335.00	4,517.00	8,134.00	24,138.00
3.4	Publication and dissemination costs	9,631.00	17,778.00	14,566.00	14,872.00	56,847.00
3.5	Other costs	6,647.10	9,256.10	10,250.30	9,001.50	35,155.00
3.6	Financial audit costs	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	20,000.00
	SUB-TOTAL	86,413.10	101,817.10	112,753.30	99,016.50	**400,000.00**

Item		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Topic 4: Seed governance & peace						
4.1	Personnel costs	69,129.00	69,526.00	60,333.00	32,551.00	248,631.00
4.2	Sub-contracting/consultants costs	30,500.00	73,000.00	35,111.00	12,500.00	134,644.00
4.3	Travel & lodging costs	34,331.00	4,572.00	4,687.00	4,760.00	47,725.00
4.4	Publication and dissemination costs	2,000.00	3,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	9,000.00
4.5	Other costs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
4.6	Financial audit costs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	SUB-TOTAL	135,960.00	150,098.00	102,131.00	51,811.00	**440,000.00**
Central and Horn of Africa Coordination unit						
5.1	Personnel costs	39,690.00	32,410.00	35,180.00	36,245.00	143,525.00
5.2	Sub-contracting/consultants costs	5,000.00	0.00	0.00	5,000.00	10,000.00
5.3	Travel & lodging costs	90,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	90,000.00
5.4	Publication and dissemination costs	2,600.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,021.00	8,621.00
5.5	Financial audit costs WCDI	6,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	24,000.00
5.6	Other costs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	SUB-TOTAL	143,290.00	40,410.00	43,180.00	49,266.00	**276,146.00**
West Africa Coordination unit						
6.1	Personnel costs	19,600.00	15,150.00	15,600.00	21,460.00	71,810.00
6.2	Sub-contracting/consultants costs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
6.3	Travel & lodging costs	5,890.00	3,000.00	3,000.00	6,154.00	18,044.00
6.4	Publication and dissemination costs	2,000.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00	4,000.00
6.5	Other costs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	SUB-TOTAL	27,490.00	18,150.00	18,600.00	29,614.00	**93,854.00**
	Coordination SUB-TOTAL	170,780.00	58,560.00	61,780.00	78,880.00	**370,000.00**
	Total SDC funding	505,410.70	423,851.00	368,283.30	312,455.00	**1,960,000.00**
	Total complementary funding					**1,960,000.00**

8 Risk analysis

Find the main risks, mitigation measures and levels of probability and impact below. The new phase will work in contexts beset by issues of conflict and fragility; so risk of project interruption is considerable.

Category: Safety & security risks (Contextual)

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation
Conflict and instability impacts project activities	M	H	➢ Regular check-in with TAC, and staying abreast of Embassy-sourced security assessments ➢ Ensure activity plans have an online-only alternative solution if on-the-ground activities are not possible
Mobility restrictions due to instability or COVID-19	M	M	➢ Ensure activity plans have an online-only alternative solution if on-the-ground activities are not possible ➢ Regularly review activity workplans to adapt/adjust timelines, as needed, to accommodate disruptions
Funds transfer restrictions	M	L	➢ Select sub-contracted partners with experience in hosting ISSD Africa, partner programme or similar activities/events

Category: ISSD Africa insights (Programmatic)

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation
ISSD Africa action research fails to yield new insights	L	H	➢ Topic selection, as well as preliminary activity and output identification has been based on extensive consultations during the proposal phase. This has allowed the formulation of action research questions and proposed methods that are already known to be relevant. ➢ Partners in lead/co-lead and topic team roles are already active in humanitarian and development projects enabling their knowledge-needs to be accounted for in activity planning. ➢ Partners within the coordination unit and topic teams are experienced in designing high quality knowledge processes that pro-actively seek high partner participation in the development of knowledge
Lack of partner interest to hear and apply ISSD Africa insights and attend events	L	H	➢ Action research and events are designed and developed in constant discussion with relevant partners (incl. PAC & TAC). Activities and events are framed as giving partners a platform on which to build and promote their own activities ➢ For events, specific attention will be given to inviting a broad and diverse array of participants so as to encourage buy-in from policy and decision-makers ➢ Empowering the PAC to connect and promote ISSD Africa to the ABSP and other national and pan-African initiatives will ensure a sufficient uptake of outputs

Category: Localisation (Institutional & Contextual)

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation
A partner cannot be found to lead the African Support Unit	M	L	➢ Upon initiation of the programme, specific attention will be given to forming a ToR for a suitable partner. ➢ Until this happens, representatives of complementary initiatives are empowered to facilitate and support activities ➢ Potential organisations will be inventoried against these clear selection criteria. ➢ With TAC a dialogue will help to identify partners that each has experience in working with.
ISSD Africa activities are completed in a non-conflict sensitive manner – against Do No Harm principles	L	H	➢ ISSD Africa will ensure to comply with Do No Harm principles and guidelines as described under previous knowledge outputs. ➢ Specific attention will be given in activity planning to ensure that any parties currently engaged in a conflict are assessed on their ability to contribute neutrally and with the best interest of all stakeholders in that context. ➢ Regular reflection via TAC on activities which are conducted in conflict settings. ➢ Periodic review, via TAC of how Do No Harm principles are employed in their practice
Local partners' contributions are hampered by capacity gaps	M	H	➢ Selection of local partners to be based on previous experiences with programme partners ➢ Specific attention and resources to be made available to build the capacity of important local partners to contribute to achieving desired outputs
Political sensitivities and shifting realities impact local partners' willingness to participate	L	M	➢ Local partners required to confirm ability to work on activities in advance of funds transfer and/or initiation of activities ➢ Local partners given sufficient freedom to shape their own involvement in supporting the programme's activities ➢ Local partners assured that they can withdraw from programmatic activities if needed.

9 Monitoring and evaluation

M&E purpose
The M&E approach will serve the following purposes:
- Inform the donors: with our M&E approach we will measure progress towards planned outcomes, to be accountable for investments made. The fully elaborated results framework will be the basis for tracking progress.
- Improve implementation of the programme: we will use M&E as an instrument to strategically guide programme implementation. Findings and feedback from M&E will be used to inform and guide partners in programme implementation.
- Inform other projects, programmes and stakeholders: the M&E system will be designed to provide (practical) evidence of the value of the tested innovations, sharing results with other or organisations, projects and programmes and encouraging them to use these for improving seed sector interventions and policies.

Designing the M&E approach, methodologies and tools
The results framework for ISSD Africa and its topical projects will be the starting point for the monitoring and evaluation of ISSD Africa. Find in Annex 1 the results framework for Coordination / Community of Practice level outcomes. Find in topic proposal annexes the specific results frameworks for each project topic.

Data will be collected related to the management of the community of practice, as well as data for the individual thematic projects, including:
- Annual activity and financial reporting
- Event participation and knowledge product use metrics
- Communication metrics at CoP level

Mid-term evaluation meeting
In the previous phase of ISSD Africa a mid-term evaluation meeting was highly useful to share progress and discuss emerging insights as well as challenges and necessary adaptions to work planning. For this proposed phase, we will place more emphasis on this mid-term evaluation meeting and schedule this as an online gathering near the end of the second project year.

Members of the Programme Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee will be asked to reflect on progress and make recommendations for ensuring:

- The quality and relevance of emerging insights and derived knowledge products that have been developed thus far.
- The extent to which cross-topic collaboration and learning is improved compared to the last phase of ISSD Africa.
- The extent to which the ambition for enhanced involvement of francophone countries and their issues and key organisations has increased as compared to the previous phase of ISSD Africa
- The extent to which the Coordination unit and its West Africa sub-unit delivers the necessary support to action learning activities
- The extent to which the PAC & TAC are useful bodies to inform the strategy and operations of ISSD Africa and build closer links to existing partner initiatives;
- The extent to which the PAC is serving its goal of strategically informing ISSD Africa of prevailing trends and opportunities around seed sector development in Africa.

CoP member experience
COVID-19 forced the previous phase of ISSD Africa to switch many activities to an online format. This offered the opportunity to engage with many more people who would not ordinarily be able to attend events. Two separate 'user experience' surveys yielded useful information. In the proposed phase, we again plan for online interaction and so user experience surveys are planned on an annual basis. This will help to inform on how 'distant' CoP members value their engagement with ISSD Africa and how the programme can better engage them.

Annex 1. Results framework

Strategy of intervention	Key indicators	Target	Sources & means of verification	Assumptions & risks
IMPACT: Smallholder farmers in fragile and conflicted-affected states (FCS) have improved access to sufficient, high quality, affordable, diversified seed of locally adapted varieties farmers prefer resulting in increased resilience, higher farm income, improved food and nutrition security and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity				
GOAL: An international community of practice comprising humanitarian, development and peace stakeholders supports and steers sustainable seed sector interventions in fragile and conflict-affected states in Africa.				
Outcome 1: Enabling structure for the effective facilitation of the CoP operational and tailored to support HDP-Nexus	**% of partners validating the CoP's governance structure, mandate to operate and capacity in coordinating the CoP and organisation and facilitation of action learning projects**	**75%**	**Mid-term internal evaluation, final impact reporting of action learning project partners**	➢ **CoP members will respond to surveys in sufficient numbers** ➢ **Partners will express opinions openly in TAC & PAC** ➢ **Partners will invest time to evaluate ISSD Africa structure/role**
Output 1.1: International coordination unit and African support unit operational	% of International management unit annual work plan completed Decision on African support unit within first project year	80% Suitable African support unit found	Annual work plans and progress reporting	➢ Support requests to coordination unit are made in a timely manner ➢ Annual activities are planned in a way that it is logical for the coordination unit to play a role ➢ Suitable African support unit can be identified that brings value to the programme
Output 1.2: Technical and programmatic advisory committees operational	No. of TAC meetings No of PAC meetings	8 8	Minutes of meetings	➢ TAC and PAC members make themselves available for the meetings

Strategy of intervention	Key indicators	Target	Sources & means of verification	Assumptions & risks
Output 1.3 : Action learning projects supported	No. of action learning projects supported No. of (face-to-face/virtual) meetings between ISSD Africa coordination unit and project leads Objective assessment by action learning topic leads in mid-term and end-of-project meetings	4 48 (3 per topic per annum) 80%	Annual project reports Meeting minutes Mid-term and end-of-project surveys	➢ Project leads/teams will closely collaborate and accept the support/advice provided ➢ Project leads/co-leads will accept meeting invites ➢ Project leads/co-leads will evaluate fairly
Outcome 2. Africa-grown solutions to boost the HDP-Nexus in seed sectors developed	**No. of Africa-grown solutions developed based on the results of the action learning projects**	**8**	**Publications**	**Risk:** **Action learning projects do not produce insights conducive to the advancement of the HDP-Nexus on seed**
Output 2.1: Partnerships for action learning projects operational	No. of partnerships formed No. of partnership meetings	4 16	Agreement letters with partners Partnership meeting reports	➢ Partners are willing to participate actively in ISSD Africa ➢ Partners are willing to join topic team meetings ➢ Humanitarian, development and peace-building partners see value in working collaboratively
Output 2.2: Action learning projects implemented	No. of action learning projects implemented % of action learning project annual work plans completed	4 80%	Annual progress reports	➢ Action learning projects can be completed according to plans ➢ Local and international operational conditions are not impacted to the level that activities cannot be completed
Output 2.3: ISSD Africa publications developed	No. of publications developed No. of synthesis papers developed	16 4	Publication of documents on ISSD Africa website	➢ Action learning partners prioritise the development of knowledge products and associated publications ➢ Action learning partners liaise effectively with the coordination unit on the development of publications

Strategy of intervention	Key indicators	Target	Sources & means of verification	Assumptions & risks
Outcome 3: Integration of ISSD Africa derived insights in HDP seed sector interventions and policies supported	**No. and relevance of the adapted seed sector HDP interventions based on the insights derived from ISSD Africa** **No. and relevance of the policies that have integrated ISSD Africa derived insights**	**12** **3**	**Discussions with programme representatives during Synthesis workshop in 2027** **Review of policy-oriented products and feedback on their uptake by relevant actors**	**HDP actors and policy-makers do not value ISSD Africa's emergent insights and knowledge products and do not incorporate them into interventions and policy processes**
Output 3.1: ISSD Africa communication channels actively used to share information and expertise	No. of website pageviews and unique visitors No. of website posts No. of newsletters specifically presenting new content and/or learning opportunities No. of LinkedIn posts	Per annum, double the amount of visitors than newsletter recipients 4 per month 3 per project year 3 per month	WordPress website statistics WordPress website statistics Newsletter archive statistics LinkedIn statistics	➢ Project partners share their knowledge products and communication pieces with the coordination unit ➢ Project partners recognise the importance and value of regularly posting knowledge-focused communications ➢ CoP communications recipients still value HDP-Nexus focused communications content
Output 3.2: International ISSD Africa meetings facilitated	No. of international face-to-face events facilitated No. of online events facilitated No. of organisations participating in the meetings	3 4 30	Event reports Event reports Participant lists	➢ Complementary initiatives support the organisation of two synthesis events ➢ Action learning projects recommend relevant and diverse organisations for invitation ➢ Action learning projects still see value in hosting online events post-COVID

Strategy of intervention	Key indicators	Target	Sources & means of verification	Assumptions & risks
Output 3.3: ISSD Africa international policy dialogues facilitated	No. of events facilitated	2	Event reports and participant lists	➢ Action learning projects lead the organisation of national-level policy-oriented dialogues to which ISSD Africa can bring additionality ➢ Policy-makers see value in attending ISSD Africa dialogues

Annex 2: Overview of complementary funding

Consortium partners are engaged in numerous relevant seed sector interventions across Africa which align with the ambition and goals of ISSD Africa.

Together, partners have outlined €1.96 million Euros of complementary funding from these activities. Letters of support from partners can be provided on confirmation and initiation of the programme.

You can find an overview of this complementary funding **here** (https://issdafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/ISSD-Africa-HDP_Overview-of-complementary-funding.xlsx)

Annex 3. Topic proposals

Topic 1: Resilient and diverse seed systems

1. Topic summary

Across Africa, including the Horn of Africa, the impact of climate change resulting from erratic and less predictable rainfall, higher temperatures, heat spells, and recurring droughts, has become evident. As a result of the irregularities and uncertainties created by climate change, farmers can no longer rely on crops and crop varieties that used to do well, with negative impacts on food and nutrition security and the capacity of farmers to withstand shocks. In the Horn of Africa and other parts of the continent, climate change impact is exacerbating the devastating impact of conflict and war, resulting in loss of lives, destruction of goods and livelihoods, and massive displacement of people inside countries and across borders.

In the previous phase of ISSD Africa, novel strategies and practices, and configurations of actors to work together to mobilise agrobiodiversity for climate change adaptation were identified, documented and reviewed/analysed for insights and lessons learned. Examples from several countries demonstrate that it is feasible to strengthen national seed systems to effectively use crop diversity for sustainable agricultural development and resilience, but challenges remain.

In this new phase of ISSD Africa, new learning questions and activities will validate and, where appropriate, scale, the results obtained in the previous phase through support to partners in countries with protracted crisis situations, including Ethiopia, Somaliland, Northern Uganda, South Sudan and Sudan; while cross regional exchange and learning will be explored with countries in West Africa facing similar crises.

This thematic action proposal will coordinate action research on community seed banks in protracted crisis situations, on crop diversification and participatory crop improvement, and on policies in support of both topics (e.g., addressing key elements of farmer-managed seed systems, such as the recognition and support of community seed banks; and the registration of farmer varieties); document and review crop diversification strategies and practices; carry out capacity development activities; and develop knowledge products and events for sharing of knowledge. It will facilitate the uptake of the Protocol for collaboration between the national genebank and community seed banks; and support the implementation of the Seed Knowledge Hub in South Sudan.

2. Key information

Topic	Resilient and diverse seed systems
Topic lead	Bioversity International, Rome, Italy Ronnie Vernooy, r.vernooy@cgiar.org c/o Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, WUR Wageningen, The Netherlands
Topic Co-lead	Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, WUR Wageningen, The Netherlands Arnab Gupta. Email: arnab.gupta@wur.nl
Action research partners (to be confirmed)	University of Juba, South Sudan
	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, South Sudan
	Seed and Biodiversity Organization (S-BRO), South Sudan
	HAVOYOCO, Somaliland
	CARE, Somaliland
	Sanaag University, Somaliland
	Al Fasher University, Sudan
	NARO-PGRC Uganda
	Mercy Corps, Ethiopia / Ethiopia-Netherlands Seed Partnership Plus project
	Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, Ethiopia
	Seed Savers Network, Kenya
	University of Niamey, Niger
	Afrique Verte (NGO)
Geographic location	Horn of Africa, Eastern Africa, with engagement with Niger
Duration	4 years
Budget	ISSD Africa funding: Euro 350,000

3. Context

3.1 Problem statement

Across Africa, including the Horn of Africa, erratic and less predictable rainfall, higher temperatures, heat spells, and recurring droughts are predicted to become more frequent. This is leading to a change of cropping seasons and growing cycles and occurrence of new pests and diseases. As a result of these irregularities and uncertainties, farmers can no longer rely on crops and crop varieties that used to do well, with negative impacts on nutrition and food security and the capacity of farmers to withstand shocks. In the Horn of Africa and other parts of the continent (western Sahel region), climate change impact is exacerbating the devastating impact of conflict and war, resulting in loss of lives, destruction of goods and livelihoods, and massive displacement of people inside countries and across borders.

Farmer communities in protracted crisis situations are vulnerable because they do not have resilient seed systems that provide affordable, diverse and good quality seed/seedlings of staple crops, minor crops, vegetables, and forage species (important for feeding their livestock) in a timely manner. Because of the high level of vulnerability and dependence on humanitarian aid, their agricultural productivity and other livelihood resources are prone to shocks and crises. They also have difficulties accessing suitable farm inputs, such as agronomic knowledge, fertilizers, tools; creating income generation options (e.g., sale of fresh or processed produce); and finding efficient marketing channels.

External interventions, as organized by development and humanitarian agencies, do not always sustainably respond to farmer and community needs or interests; an example is supply of emergency seed of varieties that are not adapted or fail to germinate in particular local agroecological conditions.

To address this high vulnerability, opportunities could be explored to make more effective use of plant genetic resources, diversify and improve farming, generate income, and respond timely and effectively to adverse effects of climate change and the impact of conflict and war. The strengthening of farmer-managed seed systems through action research and learning is such an opportunity, but will require efforts at multiple scales, from local to national and regional.

This Theme will build on the key topics, activities and results of the previous ISSD Africa project Theme 3 "Agrobiodiversity, seeds and climate change."

4. Action learning questions

The main question is what are effective strategies, practices and policy initiatives based on the use of crop/varietal diversity that strengthen farmer-managed seed systems facing the combined impact of protracted crises and climate change.

Different sub-questions are:
4.1 What are promising crop/varietal diversification strategies that allow farmers and their communities to respond more timely and effectively to the combined impact of crises situations and climate change and avoid becoming caught in an prolonged hunger trap or move out of a prolonged hunger trap?

4.2 How can community seed banks, as a form of local, collective action, contribute not only to the conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity, but also to building up seed stocks at household level, sharing quality seed at scale, developing assets, and contributing to social security and peacebuilding?

4.3 What (new) policy initiatives can support farmer-managed seed sector development at local and national levels, e.g. obtaining recognition and support for community seed banks. registration of farmer varieties, inclusion of participatory crop improvement in breeding programmes, marketing of seeds of farmer varieties and/or products derived from farmer varieties?

5. Theory of change

5.1 Impact

The vision is improved seed, and food and nutrition security contributing to sustainable livelihoods and peace, through improving access to and availability of crop/varietal diversity and the strengthening of community seed banks, in particular engaging smallholder farmers and their marginalized communities. To achieve this, good practices, strategies, policies and institutional arrangements (e.g., protocols) should be available for the effective management of seed systems supported by effective forms of collaboration, at all levels.

Table 1. Results framework

Outcomes	Outputs	Activities
1. Effective crop/varietal diversity practices and strategies identified, validated and integrated in agricultural and rural development, and peacebuilding planning	1.1 Outcome case studies published and disseminated	Implementation, documentation and comparative analysis of practices and strategies
	1.2 Farmers' capacities strengthened to design, implement and evaluate diversification practices and strategies	Training of farmers in diversity assessment, participatory crop improvement, and value addition
	1.3 Institutional and professional capacity developed/strengthened to promote, support and evaluate diversification practices and strategies	Capacity development workshops using the resilient seed systems methodology developed by Bioversity International and partners
2. Identification and incorporation in development and peacebuilding planning of key factors and mechanisms that make community seed banks an effective form of local, collective action, contributing to quality seed provision, community asset development, and security and peacebuilding while conserving and sustainable using agrobiodiversity	2.1 Case studies (experienced community seed banks): Ethiopia, northern Uganda	Field research + Desk research + Action learning activities + Review and learning workshops + Writeshop
	2.2 Action learning case studies (new community seed banks): South Sudan, Somaliland, Sudan, that strengthen all aspects of community seed banking	
	2.3 Brief of insights/lessons learned	
3. Supportive policies and forms of multi-stakeholder collaboration identified and promoted for diverse and resilient seed sector development	3.1 Implementation of the Protocol for collaboration of the national genebank and community seed banks	Workshops to review the protocol, implementation of the protocol, and monitoring of implementation
	3.2 Policy gaps identified and new policy mechanisms developed, in particular with regard to crop diversification, community seed banks, registration of farmer varieties, and marketing of farmer varieties and derived products	
	3.3 Exchange of experiences and insights gained and learning brief	Policy review, design + Policy implementation and monitoring + Review and learning workshop + writing of brief

Assumptions

Improving access to and availability of diverse, quality seeds for adaptation to stresses (caused by climate change, conflicts and displacements, poor or failing government performance, market disruptions or failure) requires *the combination* of good practices at community level, new forms of multi-stakeholder collaboration and learning at national and (sub)regional levels, and supportive policies.

6. Implementing strategy

6.1. General approach and methodology

This theme will facilitate collaborative action learning on three interrelated key topics related to diverse and resilient seed systems bringing together a wide range of partners from the Horn of Africa and West and East Africa with diverse but complementary expertise.

6.2 Tools and activities

Participatory action research and learning tools will be used for the work on the three major topics/research questions. Activities will include desk and participatory field reviews (assessments), training, participatory field experimentation (participatory variety selection), protocol development for national seed sector collaboration, consultative policy review and design, action learning events, and write-shops. Social and gender dimensions will be addressed across the three major topics.

6.3 Drivers and blockers of change

Lessons learned from working on diverse and resilient seed systems indicate that the following are among the key factors of change:

- Much faster and cheaper ways of gathering, compiling, analysing and sharing information about relevant (anticipated) climate changes and climate induced stresses, for example, through the use of climate analogues.
- More efficient ways to identify 'best-bet' germplasm and portfolios of diverse varieties that are potentially adapted to changing conditions.
- Novel ways to efficiently distribute these promising materials in sufficient quantities to large numbers of farmers for evaluation and selection.
- Innovative seed business models and innovative seed value-chain mechanisms to respond to the demand for crops and crop varieties and to offer work and income generation opportunities, for example, through young seed entrepreneurship.
- Empowerment of farmers and their organizations to make their voices, needs and interests heard in national and international decision-making processes related to the management of plant genetic resources, seed sector development, agricultural production and livelihoods.
- The effective implementation from community to national to sub-regional levels of international agreements and national policies and laws governing seed sector development in ways that contribute to security and peacebuilding.

7. Communication plan

7.1 Target audience and its interest

The results of the work on the three major topics will first be shared among the participating organizations (in annual learning events) and then with a range of different seed sector stakeholders through reports, blogs and briefs (in English and French insofar resources allow). Knowledge products are expected to be used for decision making (public sector, international organizations), new business opportunities (private sector, farming communities), new programming (universities, NGOs, international organizations), and for learning from each other (in particular, farmer and community organizations).

7.2 Means to reach target audience

Apart from using partners' own communication channels, including the Seed Hub in South Sudan, all studies and materials developed will be shared through ISSD Africa, using its website, publications, international conferences and dialogues. Also, international courses on sustainable management of genetic resources and seeds (coordinated by WCDI and the Alliance) will be used as a platform to communicate project results.

8. Organisation, management and administration

8.1 Roles and responsibilities topic leads

The Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, together with WCDI, will be the topic leads and will coordinate the project. Both organizations will take part in targeted review, training and field activities, facilitate policy analysis, knowledge exchange and the development and dissemination of knowledge products. Both organizations have a long trajectory of collaboration, including in the previous phases of ISSD Africa. The Alliance will be an ISSD Africa consortium partner and report directly to WCDI according to the ToRs agreed upon.

8.2 Roles and responsibilities topic partners

Selected partners will coordinate in-country activities that include review, policy analysis, field activities, and annual review and learning events; and contribute to the development and dissemination of knowledge products. Selected partners will be sub-contracted by the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT [legally represented by Bioversity International] according to the organization's policies, rules and procedures. They will report directly to the Alliance.

8.3 Experiences and added value of partners

The Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT operates under the CGIAR as a global research-for-development organization delivering scientific evidence, management practices and policy options to use and safeguard agricultural biodiversity to attain global food and nutrition security. The Alliance works with partners in low-income countries in different regions where agricultural biodiversity can contribute to improved nutrition, resilience, productivity and climate change adaptation. The topic of diverse and resilient seed systems fully aligns with its mandate, interest and experience. The Alliance co-coordinator is a seed systems expert with a trajectory of international development research and capacity building of more than 30 years.

WCDI is the international expertise and capacity building business unit of Wageningen University & Research. Its aim is to support value creation by strengthening capacities for sustainable development. WCDI hosts an ISSD team supporting seed sector development programmes in Africa, including a strong focus on farmer-managed seed systems. WCDI has a strong track record of projects on sustainable agrobiodiversity management. The WCDI co-coordinator is a seed specialist with a long trajectory of international development research and capacity building.

International and national partners are all actively working on rural development, agriculture and seed sector development and have the expertise to contribute to ISSD Africa Theme 1. Some of them bring security and peacebuilding expertise to the Theme; some policy development knowledge and skills; and some rural development and farming expertise through direct collaboration with farming communities and local organizations, such as community seed banks, farmer-field schools, and local seed business.

9. Activity planning

Table 2. Overview of activities and implementing partners

Activities	Description	Implementing partner
1. Crop diversification review Horn of Africa + West Africa [*East Africa already covered in previous ISSD Africa phase*]	Desk analysis and case studies of good practices in the Horn of Africa + West Africa	Alliance and partners
2. Crop diversification needs assessments	Identify bottlenecks of farmers to diversify crops/varieties	Alliance and others
3. PVS training	Train technical staff and farmers in PVS methods	Alliance and WCDI
4. PVS experiments	Testing new crop/varietal diversity on farm	University of Juba, and others
5. PVS value chain development	Adding value to selected crop varieties (seed business and/or marketing produce)	University of Juba, and others
6. Community seed bank assessments	Assess the results of community seed banks (older and newer ones)	Alliance and partners
7. Supporting community seed banks	Provide support to community seed banks	Alliance, WCDI and partners
8. Protocol development and implementation	Promoting collaboration between community seed bank and other seed sector actors	Partners
9. Policy analysis/design	Identify policy gaps and work on policy design	Alliance and partners
10. Synthesis activities	Sharing results and distilling insights	Alliance, WCDI and partners

Table 3. Time frame and tentative quarterly breakdown

No	Activities / Quarter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1	Crop diversification review	X	X	X	X												
2	Crop diversification needs assessments	X	X														
3	PVS training			X	X												
4	PVS experiments					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
5	PVS value chain development								X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
6	Community seed bank assessments	X	X	X	X	X	X										
7	Supporting community seed banks			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
8	Protocol development/ implementation					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
9	Policy analysis/design					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
10	Synthesis activities					X				X				X		X	X

10. Budget

10.1 ISSD Africa funding

Find in Table 4 the budget overview, describing the allocation of SDC funding.

Table 4. Overview ISSD Africa funding

Activities	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Crop diversification review	5,000				5,000
Crop diversification needs assessments	2,500				2,500
PVS training	15,000				15,000
PVS experiments		10,000			10,000
PVS value chain development			10,000		10,000
Community seed bank assessments and support	2,500	2,500			5,000
Protocol development and implementation		5,000	5,000		10,000
Policy analysis and design			5,000	5,000	10,000
Synthesis and publication activities	5,000	3,000	3,000	24,000	35,000
National event		15,000		15,000	30,000
Study visits	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	28,000

10.2 Complementary funding

Table 5. Sources of complementary funding

Programme/activity name	Comments/description
Nature Positive Solutions (Alliance)	Staff time
FAO-Benefit Sharing Fund (Alliance)	Staff time
Ethiopia-Netherlands Seed Partnership Plus project, Ethiopia	Alignment with component

11. Monitoring and evaluation

Table 6. Results framework including indicators

Strategy of intervention	Key indicators	Target	Sources & means of verification	Assumptions & risks
Outcome 1: Effective crop/varietal diversity practices and strategies identified, validated and disseminated	Adoption of (new) crop/varietal diversity strategies/ practices by partners and the farmers they work with	Number of new practices adopted per country/site	Reports of field experimentation and value chain development	(New) crop/varietal diversity can be accessed timely and in sufficient quantity to allow experimentation; experiments are not affected by weather-related and other stresses
Output 1.1: Review and case studies	Review report including examples from across the Horn of Africa + West Africa	One review report	Review report published	Partners will be able to document existing practices through field visits and desk review
Output 1.2: Technical staff and farmers trained	Number of trained staff and farmers	One group per participating country/site	Training report and other documentation (photos)	Theme coordinators are able to travel to deliver training under safe conditions
Outcome 2: Factors and mechanisms identified that make community seed banks effective form of local, collective action to contribute to quality seed provision, community asset development, and security and peacebuilding while conserving and sustainable using agrobiodiversity	Partners supporting community seed banks are addressing all these dimensions in their support of community seed banks	Key factors and mechanisms identified and taken on board in community seed bank activities	Report	Field activities with community seed banks can be carried out under safe conditions
Output 2.1: Case studies (experienced community seed banks): Ethiopia, northern Uganda	Review report	One review report	Review report published	Partners will be able to document existing practices through field visits and desk review

Strategy of intervention	Key indicators	Target	Sources & means of verification	Assumptions & risks
Output 2.2: Action learning case studies (new community seed banks): South Sudan, Somaliland, Sudan, that strengthen all aspects of community seed banking	New community seed banks have strengthened their operations	Four community seed banks	Reports of field activities and assessments	Partners are able to work with community seed bank under safe conditions
Output 2.3: Brief of insights/lessons learned	Brief	Exchange meeting organized; one brief	Brief published	Partners are able to share experiences and insights face to face or online
Outcome 3: Supportive policies identified and promoted	Partners have contributed to designing and implementing new policy initiatives based on ISSD Africa activities	Two supportive policies developed/ implemented	Documentation of policy development activities	There is an enabling environment that allows for policy review and design
Output 3.1: Implementation of the Protocol for collaboration of the national genebank and community seed banks	Protocol has been discussed and endorsed	Four endorsements	Documentation of protocol development activities including signing	There is an enabling environment that allows for policy review and design
Output 3.2: Policy gaps identified and new policy mechanisms developed, in particular with regard to crop diversification, community seed banks, registration of farmer varieties, and marketing of farmer varieties and derived products.	Brief	Brief published		There is an enabling environment that allows for policy review and design
Output 3.3: Exchange of experiences and insights gained and learning brief	Brief	Exchange meeting organized; one brief published	Brief published	There is an enabling environment that allows for policy review and design

Topic 2: Humanitarian seed response in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCS)

1. Topic summary

Seed sectors in FCS are often ineffective, with weak institutional capacity to produce and make accessible seed that meets smallholder farmers' needs. In these settings, humanitarian and development actors often take different approaches to seed response; some apply market-based principles while others default to direct distribution in an effort to push seeds out quickly. A lack of agreed upon and practised principles/standards for seed response amongst humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) actors leads to ineffective responses and undermines local seed systems. For effective seed response, HDP actors must understand the complexities of conflict contexts and adapt their interventions to the unique challenges and opportunities inherent therein. More work is needed to gain agreement on better practice guidelines; to deepen understanding of what factors make seed sector interventions effective in conflict contexts; and to determine how humanitarian seed interventions can contribute to positive peace outcomes.

2. Key information

Topic	Humanitarian seed response in conflict-affected and fragile states
Lead / Co-lead	Mercy Corps & SeedSystem
Partners action learning (to be confirmed)	SeedSystem
	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UN-FAO)
	USAID/BHA-funded PRO-WASH & SCALE Award
	Mercy Corps in-country partners tbc
Geographic location	Nigeria, Sudan, Central African Republic, Ethiopia* *This is what is known at this time. Other geographies will be determined in consultation with partners after initiation, and refined over the life of the program.*
Duration	September 2023 - August 2027
Budget	ISSD Africa funding: 400,000 Euros

3. Context

Fragile states -- those suffering or recovering from a crisis such as violent conflict, political or economic upheaval, epidemics or natural disasters -- are often characterised by unstable political systems with weak governance. Additionally, they suffer from low levels of economic investment, labour displacement and unstable security situations, often resulting in a society with a short-term focus on securing its basic needs rather than on long-term development. Conflict is often the centrepiece of fragile states, being a driver and a result of fragility, and in many instances is compounded by the effects of climate change, the food crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. These natural and man-made disasters can spark or aggravate conflicts further, with effects that often spill over to all economic sectors, particularly hampering agricultural production systems.

Seed sectors in fragile states are often ineffective, with weakened institutional capacity to produce and make accessible seed that meets smallholder farmers' needs. In these settings, humanitarian and development actors often take different approaches to seed response; some apply market-based principles, others default to direct distribution in an effort to push seeds out quickly. A lack of agreed upon and practised principles for seed response amongst humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) actors in these settings leads to ineffective responses and undermines local seed systems.

For effective seed response, HDP actors must understand the complexities of conflict contexts and adapt their interventions to the unique challenges and opportunities inherent therein. For the geographic locations this topic plans to work in, there are numerous conflict-related and other shocks contributing to fragility and exacerbating already severe humanitarian situations.

For example, in the **Central African Republic[3]**, a large portion of the population continues to face a humanitarian crisis, with violence against civilians and insecurity contributing to internal displacement. People's access to their livelihoods, including agriculture, continues to be severely limited as a result of insecurity. In several parts of **Ethiopia**, conflict and drought continue to cause new displacements. Over 17.5 million people across the country require humanitarian assistance in agriculture. In **Northeast Nigeria**, years of protracted conflict and extremist violence continue to prevent many people from growing the food they need or earning an income.[1,4] An estimated 4.3 million people in Northeast Nigeria are at risk of severe hunger at the peak of this year's lean season (June-August 2023) if urgent actions are not taken. While in **Sudan,** the recent conflict has led to several food distribution interventions ongoing to provide short-term relief. However, there are emerging reports of strained community relations with the arrival of IDPs and host communities like Gedaref due to pressure on local resources.

Understanding the conflict dynamics, and their effects on seed sector functioning, is critical for humanitarian and development actors to design and implement effective seed interventions. More effective and conflict-sensitive interventions help build the foundation for functioning seed sectors that ensure sufficient amounts of quality, preferred varieties and seeds are available, accessible and utilised, and improve the systems' long-term resilience.

3.1 Problem statement

In FCS contexts, multiple actors respond to different challenges and priorities – humanitarian responders strive to meet immediate needs, often following an emergency; development practitioners focus on strengthening the seed sector; and peace actors focus on improving social cohesion amongst divergent groups and addressing the root causes of the conflict. In these FCS contexts, seed interventions are often a part of humanitarian and development responses; seed is a critical component of the overall agricultural system and can yield quick returns for farmers, including for men, women and the most vulnerable.

However, there is often a disconnect between the approaches these actors take, particularly in FCS. Humanitarian interventions often weaken seed sectors in the long-term through the displacement of private sector actors, market flooding of inexpensive or free seeds, or bulk purchases of crops or seeds not suitable for the climate or environment. To avoid these pitfalls, consensus is needed amongst humanitarian and development actors and policy makers on what elements make seed sector interventions effective in conflict contexts, and how these interventions might contribute to longer-term peace outcomes. HDP actors need to agree upon and adopt principles or standards for appropriate seed responses that are timely, targeted, coordinated and that build upon and improve existing systems, being formal or informal. This is especially critical in shock-prone areas where needs switch frequently between emergency and development interventions; in these locations emergency interventions need to be linked to and support development goals.

Currently, there are a range of different principles, practices and standards for implementing seed sector interventions in humanitarian and development contexts. For example, the 10 Guiding Principles for Good Seed Aid Practice in the [Seed Emergency Response Tool](#) (SERT), developed under the previous ISSD Africa program; [SEADS Standards](#), a set of international principles and minimum standards that support people responding to a humanitarian crisis to design, implement, and evaluate crop-related crisis responses; and donor guidelines such as the USAID/Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance's [emergency guidelines](#). These guides aim to increase the effectiveness of seed responses while doing no harm. However, many actors are not adhering to these standards, either because they are not contextualised to their regions, they are not aware of them or they lack incentives for upholding them.

Over the last three years under ISSD Africa Phase 1, advances were made in understanding the effects of conflict and seed sectors and in creating tools for humanitarian actors to use when

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[3] UN OCHA Situation Reports for Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Northeast Nigeria and Sudan. https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/car; https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ethiopia/; https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/nigeria/; and https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/sudan/

[4] Love, Abby, Wilfred Ouko, Tijjani Babakura, Charles Dawha, Sunday Duntoye, Lauren Pincus, Usman Saad, and Muhammed Umar (2023). Seed systems in Conflict-Affected Areas: A report from pilot testing the Context Analysis Tool in NE Nigeria. Produced by Mercy Corps as part of ISSD Africa. https://issdafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Report-from-CAT-Pilot-testing_28Feb2023.pdf

intervening in these contexts.[5,6] However, as outlined in the [ISSD Communiqué brief on Resilience to Shocks and Stresses](#), more work is needed to engage and mobilise HDP actors behind the adoption and implementation of better practice guidelines; to deepen understanding of what factors make seed sector interventions effective in conflict contexts; and to determine how seed interventions can contribute to positive peace outcomes in fragile states.

4. Action learning questions

4.1 Key question 1: What humanitarian seed-related interventions are effective at increasing seed security in FCS contexts?

Sub questions which may be addressed during the course of study:
- *How do the effects of conflict on seed sectors differentially impact vulnerable groups?*
- *What factors make humanitarian seed sector interventions effective in conflict contexts?*
- *How can humanitarian seed sector interventions contribute to positive peace outcomes[7]?*

4.2 Key question 2: How can seed security principles, policies and/or practice guidelines be tailored and operationalised to better support seed security in FCS?

Sub questions which may be addressed during the course of study:
- *Which existing seed security principles, policies and/or practice guidelines are most relevant in FCS?*
- *What are the barriers HDP actors face in adopting and operationalising seed security principles, policies and/or practice guidelines?*

5. Theory of change

5.1 Impact
The impact desired under this topic is that HDP actors abide by a set of principles and guidance that increase the short and long term effectiveness of humanitarian seed interventions in FCS and contribute to positive peace outcomes.

Assumptions
For our ToC we have the following assumptions:
- HDP actors are interested in the topics and willing to share information
- Agricultural activities are not halted in the face of conflict during the implementation period
- Priorities/views of policy and government actors do not change over the course of the project in ways that de-prioritise seed sector strengthening

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[5] Sperling, Louise; Charles 'Ted' Holmquist; Wilfred Ouko; Andrea Mottram & Abby Love. 2022. Seed systems in Conflict-Affected Areas: Context Analysis Tool. Version 1. Produced by Mercy Corps and SeedSystem as part of the ISSD Africa activity. https://issdafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/CAT_Final_English.pdf

[6] Sperling, Louise, Andrea Mottram, Wilfred Ouko and Abby Love. 2022. Seed Emergency Response Tool: Guidance for Practitioners. Produced by Mercy Corps and SeedSystem as a part of the ISSD Africa activity. https://issdafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/SERT_Digital_Jun22.pdf

[7] Positive Peace can be described as[6] the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies. The 8 pillars associated with positive peace include: Well-functioning Government, Sound Business Environment, Equitable Distribution of Resources, Acceptance of the Rights of Others, Good Relations with Neighbours, Free Flow of Information, High Levels of Human Capital, and Low Levels of Corruption. https://www.visionofhumanity.org/the-eight-pillars-of-positive-peace/

Table 1. Results framework

Outcomes	Outputs	Activities (potential)
1. Humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors are equipped with the knowledge and resources to assess and strengthen seed sectors and respond to farmers' needs in FCS	1.1 Learning document(s) on seed sector performance in FCS contexts, including learning directly linked to positive peace outcomes (where possible)	Conduct desk review of documentation on seed-related activities in conflict-affected areas including a) how the effects of conflict on seed sectors differentially impact vulnerable groups, and b) contributions of seed interventions to positive peace outcomes
		Facilitate online discussion(s) with relevant stakeholders
		Develop learning document(s) from desk review & discussions
		Publish and disseminate document(s) widely with a range of HDP stakeholders
	1.2 Adapted or new tool(s) to support assessment and design of humanitarian seed response in FCS, linked to opportunities to strengthen the longer-term resilience of the system	Review CAT, SERT and other relevant assessment and design tools
		Test CAT/SERT in 1-2 FCS contexts and disseminate learnings
		Update CAT & SERT, as needed, based on review, pilot and feedback
		Disseminate updated/new tool(s) widely with a range of HDP stakeholders
	1.3 Cadre of humanitarian and development specialists trained on best practices for assessing and designing seed sector interventions in FCS contexts	Review SSSA training and other materials, including virtual trainings
		Adjust/update training materials, including adding relevant FCS context info and considerations
		Pilot training materials with cohort of humanitarian & development specialists
		Publish and disseminate training materials widely with a range of HDP stakeholders
2. Improved seed sector principles, policies and/or practice guidelines are known, understood, endorsed and implemented by HDP actors	2.1 Learning document(s) on contextualising seed-related principles, policies and/or practice guidelines for FCS	Desk review of relevant seed principles, policies and/or practice guidelines, including mapping current platforms for seed knowledge sharing among HDP actors at different levels (global, regional, community-level)
		Facilitate workshops and/or meetings with relevant stakeholders, such as policy makers and implementing partners
		Develop learning document(s) from desk review & discussions
		Publish and disseminate document(s) widely with a range of HDP stakeholders
	2.2 Updated/adjusted Guiding Principles for Good Seed Aid Practice, tailored to various audiences	Peer review committee and stakeholder consultations with various HDP actors established to review/test and collate feedback on the Principles
		Adjust principles, as needed, based on feedback
	2.3 Knowledge sharing event(s) to sensitise HDP and policy actors to the Guiding Principles for Good Seed Aid Practice	Create participatory process for endorsing Principles
		Host workshop(s)/webinars to disseminate Principles among HDP actors (in person and/or virtual)

6. Implementing strategy

6.1 General approach and methodology

Our overall approach combines accepted best practice with in-depth understanding of local context, and is built around the following principles:

We work in geographies where Mercy Corps or its partners have existing programmes
We do this in order to leverage context-specific knowledge and expertise, and seek cost sharing benefits and economies of scope. To begin, we propose regions that are rated within the top 16 countries in the Fragile States Index[8] and where we have existing, complementary programs: Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Sudan.

We will prioritise localisation and inclusivity throughout the programme
This topic will work with and through local actors in FCS – including national government stakeholders, formal and informal seed actors, and more – throughout the programme. We will engage them in consultations and discussion fora, workshops, trainings and other activities, as they are interested and it aligns with the programme. We will intentionally work to ensure local actors are a part of and benefit from the implementation, co-design, learning capture and sharing. We will translate into French our key outputs, as feasible, to ensure a broader set of stakeholders can engage.

We will seek at all times to leverage and build upon existing knowledge
This topic will build heavily upon the work and partnerships started under the previous ISSD Africa phase. We aim to build upon the knowledge from within Mercy Corps and SeedSystem, as well as other organisations such as Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the USAID/BHA-funded PRO-WASH & SCALE Award, other humanitarian and development practitioners engaging in seed sector responses, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI), among others.

We will emphasise communication and sharing of knowledge and results
The success of this topic depends heavily on engaging with a range of HDP actors, seeking feedback and sharing learning and results throughout the project period. Through a variety of engagements - e.g., workshops, online discussions, webinars, and other knowledge sharing events - we will source insights, collect feedback and share with stakeholders. Additionally, through the USAID/BHA-funded PRO-WASH & SCALE Award – a knowledge sharing, learning and capacity strengthening award that utilises the FSN Network – we will disseminate the learning and outcomes widely to both international actors and local stakeholders.

6.2 Tools and activities

Outcome 1: Humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors are equipped with the knowledge and resources to assess and strengthen seed sectors and respond to farmers needs in conflict-affected and fragile states

Building on the work conducted under the last phase of ISSD Africa through the Context Analysis Tool (CAT) and case studies on last mile production and distribution in fragile states, Mercy Corps and SeedSystem plan to deepen the knowledge base on what works for seed sector interventions in FCS. This was a gap identified in the last phase; there are not many documented and readily accessible case studies or learning documents on seed sector interventions in conflict settings. To address this gap, first, the topic team will conduct a **desk review of documentation on seed-related activities in conflict-affected areas** [Output 1.1] to better understand how the *effects of conflict on seed sectors differentially impact vulnerable groups* and the potential *contributions of seed interventions to positive peace outcomes.* The review will include discussions with relevant stakeholders and a literature review. The findings will be published and shared widely with a range of HDP stakeholders through fora such as online webinars, roundtable discussions and/or at existing HDP actor meetings.

Once the existing knowledge and gaps are identified and shared, the topic team will work to **update existing tools and/or develop new tools** [Output 1.2] to support humanitarian and development actors to assess and design seed sector interventions in conflict-affected areas. This will include reviewing and adjusting relevant tools such as the CAT and Seed Emergency Response Tool (SERT).

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[8] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_Fragile_States_Index;
https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/022206_african_fragile_states.pdf

Adjustments to the tools will be further assessed and tested by relevant stakeholders, leading to updated versions that will be published and shared widely.

Using the updated assessment/design tools and other relevant training materials, the topic team will **train a cohort of humanitarian and development specialists** [Output 1.3] on best practices for assessing and designing seed sector interventions in FCS contexts. The topic team will review training materials such as the Seed sector Security Assessment in-person and online materials, as well as other relevant virtual and in-person training materials including related to peacebuilding, Do No Harm and conflict sensitivity, to contextualise the materials to conflict-affected areas. The training plan will be piloted with a cohort of humanitarian and development specialists, refined, then published and disseminated via multiple platforms including the ISSD Africa website and through the PRO-WASH and SCALE Award.

Outcome 2: Improved seed sector principles, policies and/or practice guidelines are known, understood, endorsed and implemented by HDP actors

Mercy Corps and SeedSystem propose to conduct a **review of relevant principles, policies and practice standards** [Output 2.1] for seed sector responses in humanitarian and development settings, through desk review and discussions with relevant stakeholders. The review aims to surface the principles and standards that are most relevant for FCS; the gaps in application/adherence to them by different actors – i.e., what are the barriers to applying these principles/standards in conflict-affected areas?; and ways they may need to be adjusted for different actors' buy-in and action. As a part of this review, the topic team aims to **map the existing knowledge sharing and coordination platforms** for different HDP actors at various levels (e.g., global, regional, community-level), in order to ensure a wide range of stakeholder engagement in the review or testing of the principles at a later stage.

Building on Output 2.1, the topic team will conduct a participatory and collaborative process, including establishing a peer review committee and additional stakeholder consultations, to **refine or adjust a set of guiding principles for good seed aid practice in the HDP nexus** [Output 2.2]. This set of principles will build on the 10 Guiding Principles within the SERT, the SEADS standards, as well as other best practice guidelines, and be contextualised to conflict contexts. The principles will be discussed, reviewed by and tested with various HDP stakeholders, and adjusted accordingly.

Finally, the topic team will embark on an **inclusive dissemination and endorsement process** to sensitise and gain buy-in on the principles with various audiences. For example, relevant Food Security Clusters, the African Union, donors, national policy makers and implementers such as the Nigeria Agricultural Seed Council, and others. This process will ensure HDP stakeholders are aware of the principles, understand and endorse them, and feel empowered to put them into practice.

6.3 Drivers and blockers of change

The seed sector is particularly vulnerable to shocks and stresses, with emergencies threatening and compromising overall resilience. In such situations, especially in conflict-affected areas, it is imperative for responders to deliver the appropriate seed interventions quickly, intervening at the most effective and efficient point in the seed sector, with a clear understanding of the dynamics and impact of the shock or stress on the functioning of formal, intermediary, and informal seed systems.[9] Given the importance of seeds in agricultural systems, there is a strong appetite from donors, policy makers, implementing agencies and others to improve the impact on agriculture systems and the people they serve. However, donors, national and local policy makers, and implementers need to disseminate knowledge on better practice, train personnel in its use, and put incentives in place to ensure that existing 'better advice' actively shapes practice. With often competing priorities, gaining buy-in across a range of HDP stakeholders, particularly when operating in a complex conflict context, will require delicate diplomacy to achieve agreed-upon principles and standards. Building strong relationships and building upon work underway will be crucial to the success of this topic.

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[9] Sperling, L. and Meseret Getahun. Resilience to shocks & stresses. Emerging insights and perspectives for advancing the transformation of Africa's seed sector. https://issdafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ISSD-Brief7-Resilience-to-shocks-stresses.pdf

7. Communication plan

7.1 Target audience and their interests
We identify the following target audiences for this work:
- Implementers of seed sector interventions in FCS, including local and international NGOs, private sector, local research and certification bodies, and governments in the targeted regions;
- Donors and other implementing partners including Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID);
- Seed sector private actors, both informal and formal, including seed producers (public and private), seed associations, seed intermediaries and traders, etc.;
- Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and sub-regional research organisations, including CIP, The Alliance Bioversity & CIAT, CORAF/WECARD, The Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa (CCARDESA), Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA), and National Agricultural Research System (NARS);
- Institutions such as Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) in Sudan, and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); and
- Policy makers and governments such as local government in target countries of focus and Africa Union

The interest of the target audiences will be to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of their interventions in seed sectors in fragile states.

7.2 Means to reach target audience

The methods by which we will reach our target audiences include online and/or in-person workshops; one-to-one or small group discussions; webinars; conferences, as relevant; and other online or in-person platforms. Wherever possible we will link with partner organisations and existing networks. For example, leveraging existing Food Security Cluster meetings; USAID/BHA-funded PRO-WASH & SCALE Award community of practice meetings; as well as other relevant platforms.

8. Organisation, management and administration

8.1 Roles and responsibilities topic lead
Mercy Corps, as lead for this topic, will oversee and coordinate the activities in collaboration with the co-lead, SeedSystem. Mercy Corps will appoint a project manager responsible for the day-to-day management of the topic and for coordination with WCDI and the other topic leads. They will be responsible for identifying linkages with local and international stakeholders and ISSD partners and for ensuring that the work completed under this topic complements the other 3 topics, in particular Topic 3 on seed business development, which Mercy Corps is also leading.

The program manager will be supervised by Mercy Corps' Director of Agriculture Systems and will work in close collaboration with the Technical Director for the PRO-WASH & SCALE Award, ensuring their work fits more broadly within Mercy Corps knowledge management and capacity strengthening efforts. They will draw on technical expertise within Mercy Corps, including technical experts in peace & conflict, emergency response, food security, and agriculture together with relevant program expertise in identified focus countries

8.2 Roles and responsibilities topic partners
SeedSystem will act as co-lead for this topic, bringing extensive expertise in seed sector responses in humanitarian and development settings. They will partner with Mercy Corps on the technical design and implementation of the activities.

The USAID/BHA-funded PRO-WASH & SCALE Award will partner with Mercy Corps and SeedSystem through complementary knowledge sharing, research and capacity strengthening efforts. Their vast network of implementing partners provide an excellent platform for consultations, feedback and dissemination.

UN-FAO will participate as a thought partner and technical reviewer of topic outputs. Additionally, they will facilitate connections with country partners, who may engage in country-specific case studies or pilot-tests.

Other partners – to be confirmed during start up – may include WFP, USAID/BHA, and CGIAR. Their engagements may include: participating in regular communications with the topic team to share learning, review outputs and provide feedback; provide support to in-country engagements such as workshops, trainings or case studies; and facilitate introductions to relevant partners. They will also provide advice, and action when required, on a regular basis on the work plan, topics to be addressed, and dissemination methodologies.

8.3 Experiences and added value of partners

Mercy Corps
Mercy Corps exists to alleviate poverty, suffering and oppression, and help people build secure, productive, and just communities. We support communities – and the most marginalised within them – to emerge from crisis and build towards a more inclusive, resilient future. We are a multi-mandate organisation that provides access to humanitarian aid, development, and peace assistance in places affected by fragility and crisis. With inclusion and resilience as foundational characteristics, through our programs, partnerships, and influence we work towards four connected and reinforcing outcomes that determine people's wellbeing: greater food security, water security, economic opportunities, and peace and good governance.

Mercy Corps is committed to sharing its best practices and lessons learned with the broader international community. Under the previous ISSD Africa phase, Mercy Corps led two of the eight action learning topics, 1) Developing the seed sector in fragile states, and; 2) Effective seed insecurity response. The work conducted under these two topics – in close collaboration with SeedSystem and in alignment with the USAID-BHA funded SCALE Award – will be directly built upon and scaled under the new ISSD Africa phase, positioning Mercy Corps well to elaborate on the research, stakeholder engagements and connections developed under the first phase. Additionally, Mercy Corps leads the agriculture, livelihoods and markets components under the USAID/BHA-funded PRO-WASH & SCALE Award, the follow-on to SCALE. PRO-WASH & SCALE is a 4-year, global award that aims to strengthen the design, implementation, and overall effectiveness of food and nutrition security activities in emergency, early recovery, risk reduction, and resilience settings. This award continues to position Mercy Corps as a lead agency in agricultural capacity strengthening, knowledge sharing and learning, and provides a platform to engage and share learnings with a range of HDP stakeholders. ISSD Africa will build on Mercy Corps' capacity to capture and transfer knowledge while complementing its seed sector efforts.

SeedSystem
SeedSystem has been working in the emergency seed response field for over 25 years. Their work focuses on: a) helping stakeholders understand the effects of high stress on seed sectors; b) developing tools to effect better assessments and responses; c) influencing policy guidelines; and d) training practitioners in better practice. This phase of ISSD Africa will build on past knowledge and deep practitioner and policymaker links—and help to move the emergency and seed response fields further, specifically building lessons for conflict contexts

 Select projects include:

- Contributions to CAT, SERT and SEADS: 2020-2023
- Emergency response and seed security component of S34D: lead from 2017-2019
- Capacity Building in Seed sector Security Assessments: Cross-continent and Cross-institutional Focus: US OFDA/USAID funded. 2016-2018.
- Effecting Change in Seed Security Response in Crisis, Chronic Stress and Developmental Contexts: US OFDA/USAID- funded; several linked projects. 2005-2016.
- Assessing the Effects of Long-Term Seed Aid in Ethiopia IDRC-funded (2006-2007)
- Assisting disaster-affected and chronically-stressed communities in East and Central Africa: focus on smallholder farmer seed systems. US OFDA/USAID-funded. (2002-2005)
- Seed Aid and Germplasm Restoration in Disaster Situations: Lessons learned: Latin   America, Africa and Asia. IDRC-funded (2003-2005).

The SeedSystem.org website and listserv will also serve as one important conduit for disseminating information and spurring dialogue among HDP practitioners during the next phase of ISSD Africa. The website provides practical, 'how-to' guidance, reports and tools to help professionals design seed-related assistance. It currently has 2500+ members from approximately 70 countries.

9. Activity planning

Table 2. Overview of activities and implementing partners

Activity	Description	Implementing partner
1. Learning document(s) on seed sector performance in conflict-affected and fragile states, including learning directly linked to positive peace outcomes (where possible)	Includes desk review and facilitated online discussions with relevant stakeholders; summarising and publishing learning; and disseminating widely.	Mercy Corps & SeedSystem
2. Adapted or new tool(s) to support assessment and design of humanitarian seed response in FCS, linked to development opportunities	Includes review of relevant assessment and design tools, including the CAT, SERT and SSSA tools; testing CAT/SERT in FCS contexts and sharing learnings; adjusting tools, as needed, based on review & pilot; disseminating widely	Mercy Corps & SeedSystem
3. Cadre of humanitarian and development specialists trained on best practices for assessing and designing seed sector interventions in FCS contexts	Includes reviewing relevant training materials, including SSSA online training; adjusting training materials, including adding relevant FCS context info and considerations; pilot testing training; publish and disseminate training materials widely	Mercy Corps & SeedSystem
4. Learning document(s) on contextualising seed-related principles, policies and/or practice guidelines for FCS	Includes desk review of relevant seed principles, policies and practice guidelines; facilitated online discussion(s) with relevant stakeholders, such as policy makers and implementing partners; developing learning document(s) based on review; and publishing and disseminating document(s) widely with a range of HDP stakeholders	Mercy Corps & SeedSystem
5. Updated/adjusted Guiding Principles for Good Seed Aid Practice, tailored to various audiences	Includes a peer review group and stakeholder consultations with various HDP actors to review/test and collate feedback on the Principles; and adjusting the principles, as needed, based on feedback.	Mercy Corps & SeedSystem
6. Knowledge sharing event(s) to sensitise HDP and policy actors to the Guiding Principles for Good Seed Aid Practice	Includes developing a participatory process for endorsing the Principles; and hosting knowledge sharing events such as workshop(s)/webinars to disseminate Principles among HDP actors	Mercy Corps & SeedSystem

Table 3. Initial time frame and tentative quarterly breakdown

	Activities	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16
1	Project launch	x															
2	Establishment of project team	x															
3	Stakeholder workshops	x															
4	Desk reviews & online discussions on conflict/seed sectors		x	x													
5	Learning document on conflict/seed sectors				x	x											
6	Test CAT/SERT				x	x											
7	Revise CAT/SERT						x	x									
8	Training on best practices for assessing/designing									x	x						
9	Publish training materials											x	x				
10	Desk reviews & online discussions on conflict/ principles			x	x												
11	Learning document on conflict/principles					x	x										
12	Updated guiding principles								x	x	x						
13	Knowledge sharing events											x	x	x	x	x	
14	Final ISSD event															x	
15	Progress updates (end Feb)		x			x					x				x		
16	Annual reports (end Aug)				x				x				x			x	

10. Budget

10.1 ISSD Africa funding
Find in Table 4 the overview of the allocation of SDC funding for this topic.

Table 4. Overview ISSD Africa funding

Activities	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Project launch, Stakeholder workshops	30,547				**30,547**
Learning document on conflict/seed sectors (includes desk review, online discussions, etc.)	33,947	18,825			**52,771**
Test & revise CAT/SERT	16,514	31,851			**48,365**
Training on best practices for assessing/designing + dissemination			43,933	5,359	**49,292**
Learning document on conflict/principles (includes desk reviews, peer group, & online discussions on conflict/principles)	14,679	26,987			**41,667**
Updated guiding principles		20,406	21,310		**41,716**
Knowledge sharing events and final products			13,048	26,796	**39,843**
Final ISSD events				38,070	**38,070**

10.2 Complementary funding

Complementary funding will be provided by Mercy Corps. The project will benefit significantly from the PWS award. The project will leverage this award's resources, networks and knowledge sharing systems including: outlets for dissemination of resources, knowledge sharing workshops, online platform and monthly newsletters; travel and in-country support, and joint production of materials. Additionally support will be provided through other projects such as SASAS and others in the focus countries.

Table 5. Sources of complementary funding

Programme/activity name and description	Comments
USAID/Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance-funded: PRO-WASH & SCALE Award Jan 2023 - Dec 2026	Update to the SSSA online course, with likely inclusion of conflict-specific module; support to knowledge sharing events, dissemination, translation, etc.
USAID/Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance-funded: Resilience Food Security Activity in the Kasai, DRC Sep 2023 - 2028	Contingent on funding - in proposal stage.
Misc. USAID/BHA-funded emergency programs (e.g., Nigeria, CAR, Sudan)	Mercy Corps typically implements 2-3 BHA-funded emergency programs annually. They will likely have seed assessment components where we can test/refine tools, promote 10Ps, etc.
USAID-funded: Sustainable Agrifood Systems Approach for Sudan (SASAS) Nov 2022 to Nov 2025	Translation of SERT into Arabic through SASAS

11. Monitoring and evaluation

Table 6. Results framework including indicators

Strategy of intervention	Key indicators	Target	Sources & means of verification	Assumptions & risks
Outcome 1: Humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors are equipped with the knowledge and resources to assess and strengthen seed sectors and respond to farmers' needs in FCS	# HDP stakeholders reporting increased access to technical guidance on seed sector assessments and better practice guidance	20	End of project survey	Openness of HDP actors, donors and implementing agencies to use adapted tools
Output 1.1: Learning document(s) on seed sector performance in FCS contexts, including learning directly linked to positive peace outcomes (where possible)	# learning documents on seed sectors and conflict developed and disseminated	1	Annual or progress report with link to publication(s)	Existing tools are available and accessible; actors are willing to share their experiences and lessons learned.
Output 1.2: Adapted or new tool(s) to support assessment and design of humanitarian seed response in FCS, linked to development opportunities	# tools updated, adapted, or developed	2	Annual or progress report with link to publication(s)	Openness of other donors and implementing agencies
Output 1.3: Cadre of humanitarian and development specialists trained on best practices for assessing and designing seed sector interventions in FCS contexts	# people trained	20	Training agenda / attendance list	Humanitarian and development actors interested in training content and able to attend training.
Outcome 2: Improved seed sector principles, policies and/or practice guidelines are known, understood, endorsed and implemented by HDP actors	# stakeholders reporting use of the guiding principles	10	End of project survey	Stakeholders are interested in the topics and willing to adapt their practice.
Output 2.1: Learning document(s) on contextualising seed-related principles, policies and/or practice guidelines for FCS	# learning documents developed and disseminated	1	Annual or progress report with link to publication(s)	Stakeholders are interested in the topics and willing to adapt their practice.
Output 2.2: Updated/adjusted Guiding Principles for Good Seed Aid Practice, tailored to various audiences	# sets of principles updated and disseminated	1	Annual or progress report with link to publication(s)	Stakeholders are willing to contribute to the review in Output 2.1 and open to adjusting their practice.
Output 2.3: Knowledge sharing event(s) to sensitise HDP and policy actors to the Guiding Principles for Good Seed Aid Practice	# virtual or in-person knowledge sharing events	3	Event recordings and/or attendance lists	Stakeholders willing to attend knowledge sharing events

Topic 3: Seed business development in fragile contexts

1. Topic summary

By 2030, it is estimated that 2.3 billion people and 86% of the world's extreme poor will be living in fragile contexts.[10] These contexts are affected by crises such as natural disasters, epidemics, and economic, societal and/or political upheaval, combined with conflict, which is often a driver and result of fragility. Additionally, climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation are increasingly exacerbating fragility. Seed sectors - critical components of agricultural production - are often disrupted by crises in fragile contexts, ultimately impacting food system functioning and food security. To address these challenges, humanitarian and development stakeholders must avoid cyclical, short-term seed responses in fragile contexts; they need to focus on addressing long-term challenges.

Market-based initiatives target essential market functions, businesses, and institutions, and have more reach and impact than typical aid-driven, recipient-focused interventions. If applied correctly, market-based strategies can improve the capacity of markets to provide farmers and households with critical benefits, such as seed, with greater reach and adaptability than humanitarian agencies can achieve directly. The challenge for the humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) community is to collectively identify and adopt good market-based practices and strategies for building seed sector performance and resilience in fragile contexts. This includes engaging with the private sector to better understand how they can better prepare for shocks and stresses and build seed sector resilience.

2. Key information

Topic	Seed business development in fragile contexts
Lead/Co-lead	Mercy Corps & IFDC
Partners action learning	IFDC
	WCDI
	SeedSystem
	USAID/BHA-funded PRO-WASH & SCALE Award
	Mercy Corps in-country local partners tbc
Geographic location	Nigeria, Sudan, Central African Republic, Ethiopia *Other geographies will be determined in consultation with partners and refined over the life of the program.*
Duration	September 2023 - August 2027
Budget	ISSD Africa funding: 400,000 Euros

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[10] OECD (2022), States of Fragility 2022, OECD Publishing, Paris

3. Context

Crises around the world are increasingly recurrent, protracted and complex, requiring humanitarian and development interventions to address both immediate and longer term challenges. Where exposure to these crises is combined with an insufficient coping capacity at the level of the state, system and/or community to manage, absorb or mitigate these risks, fragility exists. Fragile states are home to 24% of the world's population but 73% of the world's extreme poor.[11] In these contexts, which are affected by natural disasters, epidemics and economic, societal and/or political upheaval, conflict is often a driver and result of fragility – in addition to these other risks. Humanitarian and development stakeholders working in fragile contexts must avoid cyclical short-term responses in fragile contexts and address root causes.

Market-based initiatives target essential market functions, businesses, and institutions, and have more reach and impact than typical aid-driven, recipient-focused interventions. If applied correctly, market-based strategies can improve the capacity of markets to provide farmers and households with critical benefits, such as seed, basic services, and credit, with greater reach and adaptability than humanitarian agencies can achieve directly.

Seed sectors in fragile contexts need to function amid fluid situations and absorb the effects of market disruptions, displacement and other conflict features while enabling access to a diversity of crops and varieties to support vulnerable populations. Market-based initiatives that address immediate needs, while also laying the foundations for longer term stability, can help build the foundation for functioning seed sectors that ensure sufficient amounts of quality, preferred varieties and seeds are available, accessible and utilised, and improve the systems' long-term resilience.

Addressing needs in these complex contexts re-enforces the importance of developing longer-term interventions that address humanitarian needs as well as development and peacebuilding challenges. For effective seed response in fragile contexts, HDP actors must understand the complexities of disaster-prone, climate-stressed and conflict contexts and adapt their interventions to their unique challenges and opportunities, maximising the impact and sustainability of programs and reducing the need for humanitarian assistance (HA) over time.

3.1 Problem statement

By 2030, it is estimated that 2.3 billion people and 86% of the world's extreme poor will be living in fragile contexts. These contexts are affected by crises caused by natural disasters such as drought, flood, earthquakes or "man-made" issues such as political instability, civil strife or displacement; many fragile contexts are also affected by conflict, which is often both a driver and result of insecurity, and by climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation, which are increasingly exacerbating fragility. All of these characteristics can lead directly or indirectly to the disruption and failure of food systems, where agricultural production systems are often disrupted and cease to function. Seed sectors, a critical component of the overall agricultural production system, are vulnerable to these shocks and stresses. As a result, seed availability and seed access may plummet due to disruptions in supply and distribution networks and decreased purchasing power; seed utilisation might decrease with reduction in labour availability due to population displacement from affected areas; and the overall resilience of the system is compromised.

Seed market systems (formal, informal and intermediary[12]) are interconnected and interdependent sets of **actors** – such as farmers, seed producers, multipliers, traders and agrodealers – supported by **market functions** including transportation, information services, financial services, storage and infrastructure and **rules**, such as social norms, trade and seed regulations and standards. Shocks and stresses can impact and disrupt actors at all these levels, who may struggle to cope and recover, further disrupting market functions. However, even during emergencies, it is rare for all markets to collapse. Local markets tend to be resilient and rebound quickly. Not only do people often find new economic outlets during crises, they usually depend on their local markets, local private sector actors, social networks and local support systems more than they depend on formal sector supply or on external aid. Local market actors are also among the quickest to adapt to meet vulnerable populations' needs.[13]

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Formal channels including government, commercial companies or research outlets provide farmers with new/modern varieties of certified or quality declared seed; informal channels are farmers own seed stocks, social networks, local seed/grain markets predominantly local varieties but can also move new/modern varieties; intermediary can include farmer cooperatives and other community-based seed sources.

[13] Mercy Corps. 2017. Northeast Nigeria joint livelihood and market recovery assessment.

When shocks occur, the imperative for first responders is speed: quickly deliver the appropriate intervention to the point in the system where maximum gain can be had for the most efficient investment. Often, this has resulted in humanitarian organisations procuring seed and directly distributing to farmers in need, potentially undermining local markets. While the humanitarian community is moving beyond this to more market-based approaches, most seed security interventions are still linked only to formal channels even though smallholders rely mainly on informal systems in normal times, but especially in periods of stress.[14] This can result in support for limited crops and varieties, and limited access for last mile farmers.

Market-based approaches to seed security have grown in recent years among humanitarian practitioners because of their potential to inject significant funds into local economies in times of stress, and their ability to support multiple sources of planting material over the longer term - supporting both conventional and more sustainable production systems. Market-based strategies have the potential to improve the capacity of seed sector actors to provide quality seed - with greater timelines, reach and adaptability - than humanitarian agencies can achieve directly. They also ensure markets are not undermined by large imported and highly subsidised seed distributions. However, there is still limited uptake and usage of these approaches, especially in fragile contexts. There is a need to more fully understand what market-based approaches are effective in fragile contexts and how the HDP community can collectively adopt good market-based practices for building seed sector performance and resilience in fragile contexts. This requires understanding and supporting formal and informal private sector actors to better prepare for shocks and stresses, effectively building seed sector resilience as well as their ability to engage in seed sector responses.

4. Action learning questions

4.1 Key Question 1: What market-based interventions are most effective in building seed sectors performance and resilience in fragile contexts?

Sub questions which may be addressed during the course of study:
- *What market-based seed sector interventions have been successful[15] at improving seed security in fragile contexts?*
- *What barriers do humanitarian and development actors face in supporting market-based seed sector interventions in fragile contexts?*
- *What specific conflict factors need to be considered by HDP actors when facilitating market-based seed sector interventions in fragile contexts, and what are the promising ways these factors can be addressed?*
- *What promising market-based approaches can potentially increase the resilience of seed sectors in fragile contexts?*

4.2 Key Question 2: What incentives and business models enable informal and formal private sector seed sector stakeholders to better prepare for and respond to shocks and stresses in fragile contexts?

Sub questions which may be addressed during the course of study:
- *What incentives enable informal and formal private sector seed actors to respond to demand - especially in last mile areas and for different vulnerable groups - in fragile contexts?*
- *What barriers do informal and formal private sector seed actors face in preparing their businesses for and/or responding to shocks and stresses in fragile contexts?*
- *What adjustments do informal and formal private sector seed stakeholders need to make to their business models to effectively meet market demand in the face of shocks and stresses in fragile contexts?*

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[14] Sperling, Louise, Andrea Mottram, Wilfred Ouko and Abby Love. 2022. Seed Emergency Response Tool: Guidance for Practitioners. Produced by Mercy Corps and SeedSystem as a part of the ISSD Africa activity.

[15] Successful may refer to resilient and sustainable productive agriculture, as well as responsiveness to community preferences and desires.

5. Theory of change

5.1 Impact

Impact Statement: Formal and informal seed market performance is prioritised and effective in HDP interventions in fragile contexts.

Table 1. Results framework

Outcomes	Outputs	Activities (potential)
1. Humanitarian and development actors support market-based interventions to build seed sectors performance and resilience in fragile contexts	1.1 Learning document(s) of current best practice and examples of market-based seed sector interventions in fragile contexts and building resilience of seed sectors to shocks and stresses	Conduct desk review of market-based guidance and interventions for seed sector in humanitarian and development contexts in FCS including interventions that contribute to seed sectors resilience
		Facilitate online discussion(s) with stakeholders from seed, market and conflict sectors
		Develop & disseminate learning document(s)
	1.2 Tool(s) identified, adapted and/or developed, and tested, to support design and implementation of market-based seed sector interventions in fragile contexts based on MSD guides and principles	Identify gaps in guidance from Output 1.1
		If needed, develop or adapt tools/guidance for market-based (formal, informal and intermediary) seed interventions in fragile contexts
		Test tools with relevant HDP stakeholders and private sector actors and disseminate learning
	1.3 Existing HDP stakeholder platforms and new knowledge sharing events facilitating learning on seed sector market-based responses in fragile contexts	Map current platforms for market-based seed knowledge sharing among HDP actors at different levels (global, regional, community-level)
		Host/facilitate workshops/webinars to grow and disseminate learning
	1.4 Market-based section of guidance principles for good seed aid practice updated and shared.	Integrate learning on HDP nexus market-based activities into the "guiding principles for good seed aid practice" outlined under topic 2 output 2.
		Disseminate learning with policy makers and other stakeholders to secure buy-in to principles - linked with activities under topic 2 output 2
2. Humanitarian, development, and formal/informal private sector seed sector actors are better able to facilitate/adjust seed business models to anticipate, cope and adapt to shocks and stresses in fragile contexts	2.1 Learning document(s) on: Challenges, benefits and gaps in private sector practices that could contribute to more resilient, inclusive and productive seed sectors; incentives that facilitate informal and formal private sector actors engaged in seed sectors to respond to demand in fragile contexts; and how informal and formal private sector actors can adjust their business models to better prepare for and respond to shocks and stresses in fragile contexts	Desk review of: 1) Challenges, benefits and gaps in private sector practices that could contribute to more resilient, inclusive and productive seed sectors; 2) incentives for private sector to deliver last mile seed in fragile contexts, and 3) private sector business models independently/in collaboration with public sector to better prepare for and respond to shocks and stresses
		Discussion(s) with relevant private sector and other stakeholders
		Develop & disseminate learning document(s)
	2.2 Learning journey/case study of applied learning by private sector in one country location	Test application of results from output 2.1 with private sector in one country program
		Document learning & disseminate
	2.3 Integration of private sector guidance into adapted and/or developed tools to support design and implementation of market-based seed sector in fragile contexts	Review the Mercy Corps' Private Sector Engagement Toolkit to adapt it to seed actors and other tools.

Incorporate specific learning on private sector incentives and business models into tools produced under output 1.2 |
| | 2.4 Knowledge sharing event(s) facilitating uptake of learning and guidance | Disseminate information to various stakeholders including private sector, HDP actors, research organisations, donors and governments |

Assumptions
The ToC as the following assumptions:
- Implementing agencies and other stakeholders are interested in the topics and willing to share information
- Private sector actors are interested and willing to share information and partner to produce evidence through field-based case studies and simulations.
- Conflict does not worsen during the implementation period
- Policy and government actors do not change over the course of the project

6. Implementing strategy

6.1 General approach and methodology
Our overall approach combines accepted best practice with in-depth understanding of local context, and is built around the following principles:

We work in geographies where Mercy Corps or its partners have existing programmes
We do this in order to leverage context-specific knowledge and expertise, and seek cost sharing benefits and economies of scope. We propose regions that are rated within the top 16 countries in the Fragile States Index[16] and where we have existing, complementary programs: Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Sudan.

We will prioritise localisation and inclusivity throughout the programme
This topic will work with and through local actors in FCS – including national government stakeholders, formal and informal seed actors including the private sector – throughout the programme. We will engage them in consultations and discussion fora, workshops, training and other activities, as they are interested and it aligns with the programme. We will intentionally work to ensure local actors are a part of and benefit from the implementation, co-design, learning capture and sharing. We will translate into French our key outputs, as feasible, to ensure a broader set of stakeholders can engage.

We will seek at all times to leverage and build upon existing knowledge
This topic will build heavily upon the work and partnerships started under the previous ISSD Africa phase. We aim to build upon the knowledge from within Mercy Corps and IFDC, as well as other organisations such as SeedSystem, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the USAID/BHA-funded PRO-WASH & SCALE Award, other humanitarian and development practitioners engaging in seed sector responses, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI), among others.

We will emphasise communication and sharing of knowledge and results
The success of this topic depends heavily on engaging with a range of HDP and market actors, seeking feedback and sharing learning and results throughout the project period. Through a variety of engagements - e.g., workshops, online discussions, webinars, and other knowledge sharing events - we will source insights, collect feedback and share with stakeholders. Additionally, through the USAID/BHA-funded PRO-WASH & SCALE Award – a learning and knowledge management award that utilises the FSN Network – we will disseminate the learning and outcomes widely to both international actors and local stakeholders.

6.2 Tools and activities
Outcome 1: Humanitarian and development actors support market-based interventions to build seed sectors performance and resilience in fragile contexts

Desk review and discussions
The activities will start with a desk review to gather and consolidate existing guidance on market-based seed sectors interventions in FCS contexts. This review will include an assessment and analysis of existing market-based tools for humanitarian and development contexts with application to seed sectors, as well as existing literature and research on application of market-based interventions and impact on seed sectors resilience.

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[16] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_Fragile_States_Index;
https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/022206_african_fragile_states.pdf

The process will include discussions with stakeholders from the seed sector, market systems and conflict sectors, including networks such as the [Markets in Crisis Community of Practice (MiC)](#), [SeedSystem](#) community, the [BEAM Exchange](#) and the [FSN Network](#). The process will result in a learning document that summarises the findings from these various information pathways. The learnings will be disseminated through multiple channels such as websites and online webinars.

Identified, adapted and/or developed and tested tools
Based on the gaps in tools, guidance and knowledge highlighted during the desk review, tools will be adapted or developed to support the design and implementation of market-based seed sector interventions in FCS contexts. Tools will be adjusted, as needed, and reviewed by different stakeholders to ensure they are practical and actionable. Tools will also be tested by Mercy Corps and/or topic partners to ensure they are effective in humanitarian/development programming.

Knowledge sharing and buy-in
Guidance and tools are only effective if they are used. Activities under this outcome will therefore focus extensively on the application and buy-in of market-based guidance and tools. Learning from this outcome will be integrated into the [guiding principles for good seed aid practice](#) (currently part of the Seed Emergency Response Tool (SERT) developed under previous ISSD Africa program, with plans to be adapted under topic 2), and will form a core section of the principles. Numerous pathways will be used to facilitate buy-in to and uptake of the learning and tools, such as online webinars and workshops, in-person events, roundtable discussions, etc.

Outcome 2:Humanitarian, development and formal/informal private sector seed sector actors are better able to facilitate/adjust seed business models to anticipate, cope and adapt to shocks and stresses in fragile contexts.

Desk review and discussions
Building on the review conducted under outcome 1, additional information will be collated on: 1) Challenges, benefits and gaps in private sector practices that could contribute to more resilient, inclusive and productive seed sectors; 2) incentives that facilitate informal and formal private sector actors engaged in seed sectors to respond to demand in FCS, particularly in delivering seed to last mile farmers, and 3) how informal and formal private sector actors can adjust their business models to better prepare for and respond to shocks and stresses in FCS. The review will include an assessment and analysis of existing tools, literature and research, and discussions with the private sector and other key stakeholders in one or more topic countries of focus. The process will result in a learning document that summarises the findings from these various information pathways, which will be disseminated through multiple channels such as websites and online webinars.

Learning journey/case study
Learning from the desk review will be integrated and tested in one country program, and a learning journey/case study captured from private sector actors engaged in the process. A workshop will be held with the private sector and other stakeholders in the country of focus to further discuss and disseminate learning.

Market-based seed sector tool
Collective learning on private sector incentives and business models will be integrated into the tool(s) developed under outcome 1 to better support HDP actors to use market-based seed sector interventions, and, if relevant, separate guidance for private sector actors will be developed.

Knowledge sharing
All learning, guidance and tools will be disseminated widely through the same channels described under output 1.

6.3 Drivers and blockers of change

Given crises around the world are increasingly recurrent, protracted and complex, there is a need to help HDP actors to understand the complexities of conflict contexts and adapt their interventions to the unique challenges and opportunities. Addressing seed sector security in fragile contexts requires new thinking on how markets work, the role of the private sector and government, and the sensitivity to conflict and peacebuilding in all interventions. It also requires HDP actors to come together around principles and guidance to coherently address people's vulnerability before, during and after crises. As such, having clear guidance and buy-in on how to facilitate market-based seed sectors development and understanding private sector engagement and their role in responses is important. With increasing interest in market-based responses in humanitarian contexts, there is an opportunity to further HDP work. However, with often competing priorities, gaining buy-in across a range of HDP stakeholders, particularly when operating in a complex conflict context, will require delicate diplomacy to achieve agreed-upon principles and standards. Building strong relationships and building upon work underway will be crucial to the success of this topic.

7. Communication plan

7.1 Target audience and their interests

We identify the following target audiences for this work:
- Implementers of seed sector interventions in FCS, including local and international NGOs, private sector, local research and certification bodies, and governments in the targeted regions;
- Implementers of market system development approaches in fragile contexts, including the Markets in Crisis community of practice
- Donors and other implementing partners including Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID);
- Seed sector private actors, both informal and formal, including seed producers (public and private), seed associations, seed intermediaries and traders, etc.;
- Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and sub-regional research organisations, including CIP, ABC, CORAF/WECARD, The Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa (CCARDESA), Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa ASARECA, and National Agricultural Research System (NARS);
- Institutions such as Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) in Sudan, and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); and
- Policy makers and governments such as local government in target countries of focus and African Union Commission, Members of the African Seed & Biotechnology Partnership Platform

The interest of the target audiences will be to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of their interventions in seed sectors in FCS.

7.2 Means to reach target audience

The methods by which we will reach our target audiences include online and/or in-person workshops; one-to-one or small group discussions; webinars; conferences, as relevant; and other online platforms. Wherever possible we will link with partner organisations and existing networks. For example, leveraging existing Food Security Cluster meetings; USAID/BHA-funded PRO-WASH & SCALE Award partner meetings; the Market Symposium; the BEAM Exchange; as well as other relevant platforms.

8. Organisation, management and administration

8.1 Roles and responsibilities topic lead

Mercy Corps, as lead for this topic, will oversee and coordinate the activities for this action learning project in collaboration with the co-lead, IFDC and WCDI. As topic lead Mercy Corps will be responsible for all activities under topic 3, including final decision making on activities and outputs and submission of all project and budgetary requirements.

Mercy Corps will appoint a project manager responsible for the day-to-day management of the topic and for coordination with WCDI and the other topic leads. They will be responsible for identifying linkages with local and international stakeholders and ISSD partners and for ensuring that the work completed under this topic complements the other 3 topics, in particular Topic 2 on humanitarian seed response in FCS.

The project manager will be supervised by Mercy Corps' Director of Agriculture Systems and will work in close collaboration with the Technical Director for the PRO-WASH & SCALE Award, ensuring their work fits more broadly within Mercy Corps knowledge management and capacity strengthening efforts. They will draw on technical expertise within Mercy Corps, including technical experts in agriculture, market systems development, peace and conflict, food security and emergency response together with relevant program expertise in identified focus countries.

8.2 Roles and responsibilities other partners

The topic co-leads, IFDC and WCDI, will contribute technical skills and complementary resources to ensure effective delivery of topic outputs. They will be key partners in shaping content of the topics and will draw on their collective organisational expertise and networks to further project outputs.

The USAID/BHA-funded PRO-WASH & SCALE Award will partner through Mercy Corps providing complementary knowledge sharing, research and capacity strengthening efforts, and connections to their USAID food security network. SeedSystem brings extensive expertise in seed sector responses in humanitarian and development settings, they will partner to provide technical input and engage on the inclusion of market-based learning into principles for good seed aid practice.

Other partners – to be confirmed during start up – may include UN-FAO, USAID/BHA, and CGIAR. Their engagements may include: participating in regular communications with the topic team to share learning, review outputs and provide feedback; provide support to in-country engagements such as workshops, trainings or case studies; and facilitate introductions to relevant partners. They will also provide advice, and action when required, on a regular basis on the work plan, topics to be addressed, and dissemination methodologies.

8.3 Experiences and added value of partners

Mercy Corps
Mercy Corps exists to alleviate poverty, suffering and oppression, and help people build secure, productive, and just communities. We support communities – and the most marginalised within them – to emerge from crisis and build towards a more inclusive, resilient future. We are a multi-mandate organisation that provides access to humanitarian aid, development, and peace assistance in places affected by fragility and crisis. With inclusion and resilience as foundational characteristics, through our programs, partnerships, and influence we work towards four connected and reinforcing outcomes that determine people's wellbeing: greater food security, water security, economic opportunities, and peace and good governance.

Mercy Corps is committed to sharing its best practices and lessons learned with the broader international community. Under the previous ISSD Africa phase, Mercy Corps led two of the eight action learning topics, 1) Developing the seed sector in fragile states, and; 2) Effective seed insecurity response. The work conducted under these two topics – in close collaboration with SeedSystem – will be directly built upon and scaled under the new ISSD Africa phase, positioning Mercy Corps well to elaborate on the research, stakeholder engagements and connections developed under the first phase. Additionally, Mercy Corps leads the agriculture, livelihoods and markets components under the USAID/BHA-funded PRO-WASH & SCALE Award. Building on the previous TOPS and SCALE awards, PRO-WASH & SCALE is a 4-year, global award that aims to strengthen the design, implementation, and overall effectiveness of food and nutrition security activities in emergency, early recovery, risk reduction, and resilience settings. This award continues to position Mercy Corps as a lead agency in agricultural capacity strengthening, knowledge sharing and learning, and provides a platform to engage and share learnings with a range of HDP stakeholders. ISSD Africa will build on Mercy Corps' capacity to capture and transfer knowledge while complementing its seed sector efforts.

IFDC
IFDC implements Netherlands-funded private seed sector development projects in Niger, Mali, South Sudan and Burundi. The projects focus on creating sustainable seed businesses that enable smallholder farmers to access high quality seeds in the desired quantity and at the right time. Local and regional private sector-led seed businesses are central to the IFDC approach. Sustainability derives from creating businesses that are capable of producing high quality seed and delivering valuable private sector-led extension and other support services to farmers. IFDC has developed a bespoke strategy to support seed businesses to reach farmers through the last mile and create an interesting value proposition to stimulate sustainable market demand.

9. Activity planning

Table 2. Overview of activities and implementing partners

Activity	Description	Implementing partners
1. Learning document(s) of current best practice and examples of market-based seed sector interventions in fragile contexts	Desk review and online discussion(s) with stakeholders from seed, market and conflict sectors. Development and dissemination of learning document(s)	Mercy Corps, others tbc
2. Tools identified, adapted and/or developed, and tested, to support design and implementation of market-based seed sector interventions in fragile contexts	Identify gaps from activity 1, as needed develop or adapt tools/guidance and test tools with relevant HDP stakeholders and private sector actors	Mercy Corps, others tbc
3. Existing HDP stakeholder platforms and new knowledge sharing events facilitating learning on seed sector market-based responses in fragile contexts	Map platforms for market-based seed knowledge sharing among HDP actors at different levels (global, regional, community-level), and host/facilitate workshops/webinars to grow and disseminate learning	Mercy Corps, IFDC others tbc
4. Market-based section of guidance principles for good seed aid practice updated and shared	Integrate learning into the "guiding principles for good seed aid practice", and disseminate learning to policy makers and other stakeholders outlined under topic 2 output 2.	Mercy Corps, SeedSystem
5. Learning document(s) on: Challenges, benefits and gaps in private sector practices that could contribute to more resilient, inclusive and productive seed sectors; incentives that facilitate informal and formal private sector actors engaged in seed sectors to respond to demand in fragile contexts; and how informal and formal private sector actors can adjust their business models to better prepare for and respond to shocks and stresses in fragile contexts	Desk review and online discussion(s) with stakeholders from seed, market and conflict sectors. Development and dissemination of learning document(s)	Mercy Corps, others tbc
6. Learning journey/case study of applied learning by private sector in one country location	Test application of results from activity 5 with private sector in one country program, document learning and disseminate	Mercy Corps, IFDC, others tbc
7. Integration of private sector guidance into adapted and/or developed tools to support design and implementation of market-based seed sector in fragile contexts	Review the Mercy Corps' Private Sector Engagement Toolkit and other tools. Incorporate specific learning on private sector incentives and business models into tools produced under activity 2	Mercy Corps, others tbc
8. Knowledge sharing event(s) facilitating uptake of learning and guidance	Disseminate learning to various stakeholders including private sector, HDP actors, research organisations, donors and governments through in-person/online events and discussions	Mercy Corps, IFDC, others tbc

Table 3. Initial time frame and tentative quarterly breakdown

Activities		Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16
1	Establish project team	x															
2	ISSD Africa stakeholder workshops	x															
3	Desk review market-based guidance, including online discussions and mapping		x	x	x												
4	Learning document(s) on market-based approaches				x	x	x	x									
5	Tools adapted/ developed						x	x	x								
6	Tools tested/ refined									x	x	x					
7	Market-based principles updated and disseminated								x	x	x						
8	Learning document on private sector incentives and preparedness										x	X					
9	Learning journey									x	X						
10	Integration of private sector guidance into adapted and/or developed tools										x	x					
11	Knowledge sharing events											x	x	x	x	x	
12	Final ISSD event															x	
13	Progress updates		x				x				x				x		
14	Annual reports				x				x				x			x	

10. Budget

10.1 ISSD Africa funding

Find in Table 4 the overview of the allocation of SDC funding for this topic.

Table 4. Overview ISSD Africa funding

Activities	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Project launch, Stakeholder workshops	31,427				**31,427**
Learning document(s) of current best practice and examples of market-based seed sector interventions in fragile contexts (includes desk review)	23,045	18,862			**41,907**
Tools adapted/developed, tested and refined		46,948	15,684		**62,632**
Market-based principles updated and disseminated			11,763		**11,763**
Learning document(s) on informal/formal private sector practices, incentives, and adjustments to better prepare for and respond to shocks and stresses in fragile contexts (includes desk review)	20,294	21,751			**42,045**
Learning journey/case study and workshop			37,609		**37,609**
Integration of private sector guidance into adapted and/or developed tools to support design and implementation of market-based seed sector in fragile contexts			23,526	22,794	**46,320**
Knowledge sharing events and final products			8,921	27,794	**36,715**
Final ISSD events				34,427	**34,427**

9.2 Complementary funding

Complementary funding will be provided by Mercy Corps, IFDC and WUR. The project will benefit significantly from the PWS award. The project will leverage both awards' resources, networks and knowledge sharing systems including: outlets for dissemination of resources, knowledge sharing workshops, online platform and monthly newsletters; travel and in-country support, and joint production of materials. Additionally support will be provided through other projects such as SASAS, ENSP, RiPA and AgriFin projects implementing market-based activities in focus countries.

IFDC bring complementary funding in the form of strong alignment to the A3Seed programme in South Sudan. This programme has a focus on private sector development. It may also transpire that the A3Seed programme manager will fulfil the co-lead role for this topic of ISSD Africa

Table 5. Sources of complementary funding

Programme/activity name and description	Comments
USAID/Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance-funded PRO-WASH & SCALE Award	Contribution to learning documents and knowledge sharing events
Mercy Corps market-based agricultural programs including AgriFin (Ethiopia, Nigeria) - Gates funded; RiPA (Ethiopia) - USAID funded, others as needed during implementation	Contribution to in-country discussions and testing tools
USAID-funded Sustainable Agrifood Systems Approach for Sudan (SASAS)	Testing market-based interventions
A3Seed	Private sector focused development programme in South Sudan

11. Monitoring and evaluation

Table 6. Results framework including indicators

Strategy of Intervention	Key indicators	Target	Sources & means of verification	Assumptions & risks
Outcome 1: Humanitarian and development actors support market-based interventions to build seed sector performance and resilience in fragile contexts	# HDP stakeholders reporting increased access to technical guidance on market-based seed sector guidance	20	End of project survey	Openness of HDP actors, donors and implementing agencies to use adapted tools
Output 1.1: Learning document(s) of current best practice and examples of market-based seed sector interventions in fragile contexts	# learning document(s) on market-based seed sector interventions	1	Annual or progress report with link to publication(s)	Existing tools are available and accessible; actors are willing to share their experiences and lessons learned.
Output 1.2: Tools identified, adapted and/or developed, and tested, to support design and implementation of market-based seed sector interventions in fragile contexts	# tools identified, adapted or developed	1	Annual or progress report with link to publication(s)	Openness of other donors and implementing agencies
Output 1.3: Existing HDP stakeholder platforms and new knowledge sharing events facilitating learning on seed sector market-based responses in fragile contexts	# knowledge sharing events and/or platforms sharing learning	3	Virtual recordings or attendance lists or access numbers	Stakeholders willing to attend knowledge sharing events
Output 1.4: Market-based section of guidance principles for good seed aid practice updated and shared	# stakeholders reporting use of the guiding principles (reported under outcome 2 topic 2)	10	End of project survey	Stakeholders are interested in the topics and willing to adapt their practice.
Outcome 2: Humanitarian, development, and formal/informal private sector seed sector actors are better able to facilitate/adjust seed business models to anticipate, cope and adapt to shocks and stresses in fragile contexts	# HDP stakeholders/private sector actors reporting increased access to technical guidance on private sector models	20	End of project survey	Openness of HDP and private sector actors to use adapted tools/ information
Output 2.1: Learning document(s) on: Challenges, benefits and gaps in private sector practices that could contribute to more resilient, inclusive and productive seed	# Learning document(s) on incentives and business models	2	Annual or progress report with link to publication(s)	Existing tools are available and accessible; actors are willing to share their experiences and lessons learned.

Strategy of Intervention	Key indicators	Target	Sources & means of verification	Assumptions & risks
sectors; incentives that facilitate informal and formal private sector actors engaged in seed sectors to respond to demand in fragile contexts; and how informal and formal private sector actors can adjust their business models to better prepare for and respond to shocks and stresses in fragile contexts				
Output 2.2: Learning journey/case study of applied learning by private sector in one country location	# learning journey	2 (EN & FR)	Annual or progress report with link to publication(s)	Project willing to test and capture learning
Output 2.3: Integration of private sector guidance into adapted and/or developed tools to support design and implementation of market-based seed sector in fragile contexts	output 1.2			
Output 2.4.Knowledge sharing event(s) facilitating uptake of learning and guidance	# knowledge sharing events and/or platforms sharing learning	3	Virtual recordings or attendance lists or access numbers	Stakeholders willing to attend knowledge sharing events

Topic 4: Seed governance and peace

1. Topic summary

In fragile and conflict-affected states (FCS), the governance of seed sectors faces challenges due to inadequate state capacity to govern the sector, political instability, limited resources, and inadequate policies and regulations. A lack of robust seed policy and regulatory frameworks and institutions further compounds these challenges.

As a result, other actors, such as international organisations, UN agencies, NGOs, the private sector, and local non-state actors like traditional institutions, have intervened and taken up the task of governing the seed sector. Issues of coordination, power dynamics, local actors' participation in decision-making, transparency, and accountability in seed sectors persist. Additionally, the role of seed sectors and seed governance mechanisms to peace-building in FCS remains greatly underexplored and poorly understood.

This project aims to develop effective mechanisms to facilitate synergy and alignment among humanitarian, development, and peace-building actors, and understanding how seed sector governance can be organised in FCS to make a greater contribution to peace-building.

1.1 Key information

Topic	Seed governance and peace
Lead	Wageningen University and Research (WUR), Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI), Wageningen, The Netherlands Contact person: Abishkar Subedi, abishkar.subedi@wur.nl, +31 317482252
Co-lead	Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), Amsterdam, Netherlands Contact person: Hans Smolders, h.smolders@kit.nl, +31643407678
Partners action learning (to be confirmed)	Mercy Corps
	University of Juba, College of Natural Resources and Environmental Studies, South Sudan
	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
	International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC)
	National partners in Mali and Niger (to be selected)
Geographic location	Ethiopia, South Sudan, Mali, Niger (potentially in Sudan, Somaliland, Burkina Faso)
Duration	4 years (September 2023 – August 2027)
Budget	ISSD Africa funding: 440,000 Euros

2. Context

Seed governance is characterised by different modes of collaboration between actors and by the role of smallholders farmers within them[17]. The organisation of different seed sector actors involved in formal, intermediary, and informal seed systems, as well as the decision-making processes and mechanisms related to their interventions, are central to the governance of seed sectors. Additionally, seed governance encompasses the policies, regulations, institutions, investments, and practices that govern crop genetic resources management, crop breeding, variety release, seed quality assurance, seed production and distribution, and the use of seed by smallholder farmers. This complexity necessitates effective coordination, synergy, and alignment among the different actors involved in governing the seed sector.

In fragile states, seed governance mechanisms often face significant disruptions and challenges. The weak capacity of the state to govern the seed sector and the breakdown of governance mechanisms in different seed sectors are common consequences of conflict and other shocks and stresses, such as the impact of climate change. Local institutions responsible for seed governance struggle to function effectively, leading to a lack of coordination, enforcement, and oversight.

Various actors with different backgrounds of interest, operating in fragile states, must navigate shifting priorities and power dynamics, making it challenging to develop and implement effective seed sector development and seed governance mechanisms. There is often a disconnect between the approaches taken by different actors, resulting in weakened seed sectors. Interventions may target the wrong areas, leading to the market distortion of emerging private sector actors, the distribution of poor-quality seeds, and unsuitable crop and varietal choices, resulting in poor food security outcomes for smallholder farmers. The linkages between seed governance and peacebuilding in fragile states are intertwined but poorly understood.

There is a need for comprehensive and coordinated efforts to improve the seed governance. Rebuilding and strengthening seed governance mechanisms and local institutions, fostering effective information sharing systems, and ensuring inclusive and informed decision-making are crucial steps towards improving seed governance and contributing to peacebuilding in fragile states in Africa.

2.1 Problem statement

In fragile states, the governance of seed sectors poses significant challenges due to political instability, insecurity, displacement, limited access to and competition over resources, limited technical capacity, and inadequate state capacity to govern the sector. The lack of responsive and robust seed policy and regulatory frameworks and institutions further compounds these challenges. As a result, other actors such as international organisations, UN agencies, NGOs, the private sector, and local non-state actors like traditional institutions have taken up the task of governing the seed sector.

There is a lack of understanding of which seed governance arrangements could best support the development of different seed systems in fragile states. Which seed governance strategy can support the transition from a phase of currently dominant humanitarian seed aid to a phase of integrated seed sector development? How can we best mobilise resources available in seed aid programming to invest in seed sector resilience building, and what is the role of humanitarian actors in this?

Another key issue is the lack of information sharing and difficult access to real data on various seed or seed-related activities conducted by different actors. This limits synergy, weakens coordination, and hampers alignment in various programmes. Sources of imported seed, seed quality, and adaptability of varieties are often not transparently shared with smallholder farmers, resulting in disappointment. What are the processes or mechanisms that allow smallholder farmers to participate in the evaluation of seed aid programmes?

There is a lack of examples of seed policies and regulations that are responsive to fragile states, which policy advisors and practitioners can use as guidance documents. Often, policies and regulations are structured around the context of more stable economic environments, which may not fit the fragile state. Fragile states' seed policies should recognize fragility, conflict sensitivity, governance arrangements that support the development of different seed systems, and the roles of various actors, including humanitarian and peacebuilding actors. For example, the existing seed governance structure

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[17] Rietberg, P., Gevers, H., Hospes, O. 2014. Seed governance: from seed aid to seed system security in fragile areas, Cordaid publication.

and its instruments, such as 'variety release and its criteria,' may not function well in fragile states contexts due to limited funding for crop breeding and inadequate human capacity. Instead, it may require integrating participatory approaches to legally recognise farmers-led breeding and the registration of farmers' varieties. Similar issues arise with weakly functioning seed certification in fragile states, and the security situation limits the mobility of seed inspectors, necessitating more decentralisation and delegation of power to local agricultural offices or experienced non-governmental organizations.

There is a lack of evidence showing opportunities and options for linking various seed systems and seed governance mechanisms to peacebuilding interventions in fragile states. The role of different types of seed interventions, the role of women farmers in seed systems, the role of refugees, IDPs, social cohesion, and reciprocity in seed networks are poorly understood.

This project aims to address some of these key issues by facilitating the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in seed. It involves facilitating dialogue, establishing pilots, and conducting action research to explore mechanisms that promote transparency and accountability in seed sectors. Additionally, it aims to develop a seed policy toolkit that is responsive to the development of FCS seed sectors. Furthermore, it seeks to increase understanding of the potential of the seed sector to contribute to peacebuilding efforts.

3. Action learning questions

The main question is, how can seed sector governance be organised in fragile and conflict affected states for a greater contribution to peace building?

More specific research questions include:

1. What are effective mechanisms to facilitate synergy and alignment among humanitarian, development and peace-building efforts in seed sectors in fragile states?
2. What mechanisms promote transparency, accountability and improved information sharing in seed sectors in fragile states?
3. How is power and influence in decision-making distributed among stakeholders in seed sectors in fragile states?
4. What preconditions for peace are attributable to seed sector governance?

4. Theory of change

4.1 Impact
The impact desired under this topic is seed governance mechanisms support alignment between humanitarian and development interventions contributing to peace building in fragile and conflict-affected states.

Table 1. Results framework

Outcomes	Outputs	Activities
1. National level HDP actors understand the rationale and benefit of alignment and synergy in seed sector interventions	1.1 National HDP nexus mapping conducted	Conduct baseline mapping of actors, programmes and priorities to create HDP nexus in the seed sector at national level, organise validation workshop
	1.2 Governance mechanism that promote HDP nexus to facilitate the alignment and synergy in seed sector interventions at national level developed	Consultation and design of HDP nexus mechanisms in the seed sector (such as seed hub, cluster), getting endorsement by HDP actors, facilitation of HDP nexus convening in the seed sector at national level
	1.3 Experiences on HDP nexus in seed sectors documented and shared	Review and documentation on lessons learned on the HDP nexus in seed sectors, publications of briefs
2. HDP actors working on seed understand the principles, mechanisms and practices for transparent and accountable seed sector governance	2.1 Key issues and challenges impacting transparent and accountable seed sectors in the FCS documented and shared	Review of existing data, reports and publications, conducting of action research studies on power dynamics and decision making in seed governance, mechanisms or processes of farmers' or targeted populations participation in evaluation of effectiveness of seed aid programme
	2.2 Data, skills and technologies needs and interest of HDP actors assessed for various pilot mechanisms that promote transparency and accountability in seed sectors	Selection of national partners to establish pilot mechanisms such as digital seed portal tools, assessment of capacity gaps, training and coaching to the national partners
	2.3 Lessons learned in different pilot mechanisms promoting transparency and accountability in seed sectors documented and shared	Documenting the results, key informant interview
3. Policy advisors and practitioners understand the benefits of adapted seed policies and regulations that are responsive to the development of the seed sector in FCS	3.1 Review of existing seed policies, regulations and guidelines and production of recommendations	Review of existing seed related policies and regulatory frameworks, review of government and HDP actors programmes, policies and strategies; organize key informants, interview and facilitate round table discussion, identification of gaps and priorities
	3.2: Seed policy and regulatory guidance toolkit developed for policy advisors and practitioners	Development of seed policy and regulatory toolkit for East Africa and West Africa based on the review and multi-stakeholder consultation exercise
4. HDP actors understand the opportunities and options for linking seed sectors and seed governance to peace-building interventions	4.1 Different seed sector interventions contributing to peace building analysed	Research study on the analysis of various seed sector interventions and seed governance mechanisms in the selected FCS
	4.2 Seed sector and seed governance attributes to positive peace-building identified	Actional research study on the analysis and identification of attributes of seed sector and seed governance mechanisms, conducting social seed network analysis to understand the role of cohesion and reciprocity (master degree thesis research)
	4.3 Opportunities and options for linking seed sectors and seed governance to peace-building is documented and shared	Documenting the findings and lessons learned

Assumptions

For our Theory of Change, we have the following assumptions:
- HDP actors see the value of nexus in the seed sector
- HDP actors are interested to participate in the pilot mechanisms/action research and willing to share information
- Government supportive to the project activities
- Conflict does not worsen during the implementation of various activities of the project.
- Reliable local partners are available to implement the pilot mechanisms/action research and willing to collaborate on this project

5. Implementing strategy

5.1 General approach, methodology and tools

The action research project will utilise multi-stakeholder processes, participatory approaches, conflict-sensitive strategies, and gender-responsive methods. It aims to mobilise and strengthen local expertise, institutions, and capacity.

Various tools will be employed, including facilitation of multi-stakeholder dialogues at the sub-national, and national levels, key informant interviews, community meetings with farmers' groups, validation workshops, comparative analysis, seed network analysis, case studies, household surveys and literature reviews.

Major activities encompass mapping of HDP actors intervening in seed sectors, establishment of HDP nexus in seed sectors (such as seed hub), implementing different pilots such as digital seed portal, developing a seed policy and regulatory toolkit responsive to seed sector development in FCS, conducting master's degree theses research studies to understand the seed sector interventions contributing to peace building. The project promotes the knowledge co-creation, documenting findings, publishing and disseminating lessons learned.

5.2 Drivers and blockers of change

Drivers of Change: Increasing recognition of the critical role of seed sectors in food and nutrition security and building resilience of smallholders farmers; growing demand for inclusive decision-making processes involving local communities, farmers, civil society organizations, and traditional institutions, fostering ownership, transparency, and accountability; acknowledgment of the synergies between humanitarian and development interventions, leading to efforts to align seed governance and peacebuilding; and focus on local capacity-building and knowledge sharing through joint-pilots, technical assistance and access to information to equip stakeholders with the new skills and tools.

Blockers of Change: Political instability and conflict hinder the establishment of effective seed governance mechanisms and impede progress in peacebuilding due to competing priorities and power dynamics; inadequate resources and funding limit the implementation of comprehensive strategies and initiatives, undermining the potential for meaningful change; lack of coordination and cooperation among stakeholders results in fragmented efforts, duplicated work, and reduced effectiveness of interventions, necessitating stronger partnerships and coordination mechanisms; and resistance to change and vested interests within existing systems and structures create barriers to implementing new approaches and reforms, requiring strategic engagement and consensus-building among stakeholders.

6. Communication plan

6.1 Target audience and their interests

We identify the following target audiences for this work:
- Implementers of seed or seed related interventions in FCS. This includes agriculture ministry of the governments, humanitarian and development local and international NGOs, peace keeping organisations, farmers and local communities groups, private seed sector, agriculture university, national crop research and seed certification bodies;
- Institutions such as Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GiZ);
- Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) such as Alliance of Biodiversity and CIAT;
- Seed related technical arm of Africa Union Commission such as Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA); and
- Donors and other implementing partners including Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

6.2 Means to reach target audience

The methods by which we will reach our target audiences includes HDP nexus mechanism in the seed sector at national level such as seed hub, digital tools (seed portal), multi-stakeholder workshops (online and face to face), community meetings with farmers group, webinars, conferences, various types of publications (policy briefs, toolkits, guidelines, case study reports, journal papers).

7. Organisation, management and administration

7.1 Roles and responsibilities topic lead and co-lead

WCDI and KIT are the topic lead and co-lead with the primary role of overall coordination of the project activities, which include involvement in the design of case studies and pilot mechanisms, various workshops, knowledge co-creation and sharing, and reporting. WCDI topic lead brings prior experiences and expertise on seed hub development, digital tools, seed sector development, seed policies, and regulatory work, and social seed network analysis in fragile states in Africa. Topic lead specifically takes the lead coordination role in East Africa activities. KIT co-lead brings additionality in seed sector development, seed policy, quality seed supply in fragile and conflict affected West African countries Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Burundi, South Sudan in East Africa. Topic co-lead specifically takes the lead coordination role of project activities in West Africa to align activities with ongoing seed projects in these countries.

7.2 Roles and responsibilities topic partners

Mercy Corps will bring expertise and experience in methodologies and approaches to peacebuilding, good governance, and conflict sensitivity. This will include ensuring the integration of peace, good governance, and conflict sensitivity & DNH building aspects into the master's degree thesis research, and various pilot mechanisms of this project. Mercy Corps will provide entry points in its ongoing programme in selected geographies for the implementation of project activities. In addition to this, Mercy Corps will be involved in knowledge co-creation and sharing lessons within its network.

The University of Juba (UoJ) will involve in coordination of various project activities in South Sudan. UoJ will provide secretariat to the HDP nexus in the seed sector in South Sudan.

The Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI) coordinated two programmes, and their team members will be involved in this project. First, the Ethiopia Netherlands Seed Partnership Plus (ENSP+) programme provides complementary funding to the project and provides an entry point to conduct case studies, contribute in the action research, methodologies and pilot different mechanisms. Second, the Food and Nutrition Security Resilience Programme (FNS REPRO), which is ongoing in Sudan, South Sudan, and Somaliland, provides the entry points to implement the various activities of the project and leverage its extensive local network. The seed sector resilience assessment conducted in South Sudan by the FNS REPRO programme will be used to further investigate social cohesion and peacebuilding activities. Both the ENSP+ and FNS REPRO programme teams will be involved in the design, implementation, and knowledge co-creation of various outputs of the project.

FAO South Sudan will provide its partners network in reviewing the seed policies, regulations, and guidelines that are responsive to FCS.

The Integrated Seed Sector Development in the Sahel (ISSD Sahel) programme leaded by IFDC where KIT is providing seed advisory services to the project provides entry points and its partner network in Mali and Niger to implement various activities of this project. Together with ISSD Sahel contact persons, we will identify a partner who has the capacity, interest, and commitment to host the HDP nexus in the seed sector in one of the countries (Mali or Niger).

7.3 Experiences and added value of partners

WCDI
The Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI) puts knowledge into action. WCDI has built an extensive international track record in guiding sector transformation in the domain of inclusive and sustainable food systems. Leveraging our extensive global network across government, civil society, science, and industry, our 50 advisers strengthen capacities for sustainable development in low and middle-income countries. Integrated Seed Sector Development (ISSD) is an important portfolio for WCDI. We have successfully completed ISSD programmes in Burundi, Ghana, Uganda, and Myanmar, while the ISSD programmes in Nigeria and Ethiopia are ongoing. Additionally, WCDI is the main coordinator of the ISSD Africa program since its inception in 2011. WCDI is a key knowledge partner in the food and nutrition security programme in protracted crisis situations of Sudan, South Sudan, and Somaliland. In South Sudan, WCDI has developed extensive knowledge and a community of practice in seed sector development in protracted crisis situations through Food and Nutrition Security Resilience Programme (FNS REPRO) programme. Furthermore, WCDI's ENSP+ programme in Ethiopia has integrated a seed insecurity response component to its work in conflict and post-conflict affected regions of Ethiopia.

KIT and IFDC
KIT and IFDC bring vast experience in seed sector development in African country context, including in FCS. Key aligned projects include following:

The Integrated Seed Sector Development in the Sahel (ISSD Sahel) programme leaded by IFDC where KIT is providing seed advisory and other technical services to the project provides entry points and its partner network in Mali and Niger to implement various activities of this project. It is expected that Burkina Faso will be added to this project soon. Together with ISSD Sahel contact persons, we will identify a partner who has the capacity, interest, and commitment to host the HDP nexus in the seed sector in one of the countries (Mali, or Niger or Burkina Faso). Similarly, we will identify partners in Burundi, where IFDC and KIT are implementing a Private Seed Sector Development project (PSSD).

The A3 Seed project "Accelerating Agriculture and Agribusiness in South Sudan for Enhanced Economic Development" is implemented by IFDC (lead) and KIT, with a focus on private seed sector development, aiming to provide market-oriented interventions originating from humanitarian support ("handouts") to move to a commercial, sustainable, and adaptive agriculture seed sector. KIT's role is technical support and advice on seed sectors, gender and youth approaches, M&E, and the learning agenda. Together with A3 Seed contact persons, we will identify a partner who has the capacity, interest, and commitment to host the seed sector HDP nexus in South Sudan.

Mercy corps
Mercy Corps exists to alleviate poverty, suffering and oppression, and help people build secure, productive, and just communities. Mercy Corps support communities – and the most marginalised within them – to emerge from crisis and build towards a more inclusive, resilient future. Mercy Corps is a multi-mandate organisation that provides access to humanitarian aid, development, and peace assistance in places affected by fragility and crisis. With inclusion and resilience as foundational characteristics, through Mercy Corps programmes, partnerships, and influence it work towards four connected and reinforcing outcomes that determine people's wellbeing: greater food security, water security, economic opportunities, and peace and good governance. Mercy Corps contribute to this topic by mobilizing their peacebuilding expertise in the design of action research questions on the topic and reviewing research methodologies on seed governance and seed sector interventions in peacebuilding efforts. Additionally, Mercy Corps links with its suitable programmes in the target countries to conduct the aforementioned study.

University of Juba

The University of Juba is the leading agricultural university in South Sudan. The College of Natural Resources and Environmental Studies has over 9 departments, 90 plus faculty members, and over 200 plus master's degree students. The College of Natural Resources and Environmental Studies of the University of Juba is the main partner. In addition to academic teaching and research activities, the University of Juba has been involved in the implementation of seed sector projects with various development partners, such as WCDI, ZOA, FAO, Mercy Corps, Cordaid, and AVSI. It has developed its capacities in food systems assessment, seed sector resilience assessment, in-country training courses for development practitioners, and facilitation of multi-stakeholder policy dialogues. In 2022, the University of Juba was selected to host the seed hub in South Sudan.

FAO South Sudan

FAO South Sudan will provide its partners network in reviewing the seed policies, regulations, and guidelines that are responsive to FCS.

8. Activity planning

Table 2. Overview of activities and implementing partners

Activity	Description	Implementing partner
1. Project launch, preparation and participation in project workshops	Participation in the ISSD Africa coordinated international workshops in Africa, finetuning of project activities, selection of national partners, and finalise project countries	WCDI, KIT, Mercy Corps,
2. HDP nexus mapping study	Baseline mapping to create HDP nexus in the seed sector in selected project countries of East and West Africa, organise validation workshop	WCDI, KIT, national partners
3. Facilitation of HDP nexus in seed sectors	Establishment of HDP nexus mechanisms in selected countries, establish coordination structure and hosting institute, organise nexus convening on bi-annual basis	WCDI, KIT, national partners
4. Case studies focussing to principles, mechanisms and practices for transparent and accountable seed sector governance	Review literatures, research study analysing the power dynamics and decision making in seed governance and farmers' participation in evaluation of effectiveness of seed aid programme, organise national and sub-national multi-stakeholders round-table dialogue	WCDI, KIT, national partners
5. Implementation of pilot mechanism to promote transparent and accountable seed sector governance	Implementation of pilot mechanism such as digital seed portal, technology transfer and local capacity building	WCDI, KIT, national partners
6. Development of seed policy and regulatory tool kit responsive to FCS seed sectors	Review of existing policies and regulatory framework, key informant interview, focus group discussion with farmers, facilitation of multi-stakeholder dialogues at regional level	WCDI, KIT, FAO South Sudan, national partners
7. Conduct studies to understand the role and precondition of seed sectors and seed governance to contributing the peace building	Selection of two master thesis students at Wageningen University, conduct the field research study in East and West Africa respectively	WCDI, WU, Mercy Corps, national partners
8. Publication and dissemination of project outputs	Publication of case study reports, policy briefs, seed policy tool kit, journal articles, and dissemination of project publications in various ISSD Africa convenings, workshops, newsletter, websites, etc.	WCDI, KIT, Mercy Corps, national partners

Table 3. Initial time frame and tentative quarterly breakdown

Activities	Y1				Y2				Y3				Y4			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16
1. Project launch, preparation and participation in project workshops	X	X														
2. HDP nexus mapping study		X	X	X												
3. Facilitation of HDP nexus in seed sectors					X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X	
4. Case studies focussing to principles, mechanisms and practices for transparent and accountable seed sector governance				X	X	X	x	x	X	X						
5. Implementation of pilot mechanism to promote transparent and accountable seed sector governance					x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6. Development of seed policy and regulatory tool kit responsive to the FCS seed sectors					X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
7. Conduct studies to understand the role and precondition of seed sectors and seed governance to contributing the peace building					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
8. Publication and dissemination of project outputs				X	X			X	X			X	X		X	X

9. Budget

9.1 ISSD Africa funding

Find in Table 4 the overview of the budget for this topic's activities.

Table 4. Overview ISSD Africa funding

Activities	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Total
1. Project launch, preparation and participation in project workshops	€ 72,817				€ 72,817
2. HDP nexus in seed sectors mapping	€ 61,143				€ 61,143
3. Facilitation of HDP nexus in seed sectors		€ 39,804	€ 32,913	€ 37,854	€ 110,571
4. Case studies focusing to principles, mechanisms and practices for transparent and accountable seed sector governance		€ 28,390	€ 10,078		€ 38,468
5. Implementation of pilot mechanism to promote transparent and accountable seed sector governance		€ 22,740	€ 7,283	€ 9,255	€ 39,278
6. Development of seed policy and regulatory tool kit responsive to the FCS seed sectors		€ 23,760	€ 23,935	€ 2,702	€ 50,397
7. Conduct studies to understand the role and precondition of seed sectors and seed governance to contributing the peace building		€ 32,404	€ 25,922		€ 58,326
8. Publication and dissemination of project outputs	€ 2,000	€ 3,000	€ 2,000	€ 2,000	€ 9,000
Grand total	**€ 135,960**	**€ 150,098**	**€ 102,131**	**€ 51,811**	**€ 440,000**

9.2 Complementary funding

Table 5. Sources of complementary funding

Programme/activity name and description	Comments
Ethiopia-Netherlands Seed Partnership Plus (ENSP+)	Contribution towards creating an HDP nexus in the seed sector and local capacity building
Embracing South-South seed and knowledge sharing for resilient agroecosystems and improved livelihoods: South Sudan and Uganda (FAO Benefit sharing Project, 2023-2026)	Contribution towards creating an HDP nexus in seed systems, and local partners capacity building in South Sudan
Integrated Seed Sector Development in the Sahel (ISSD/Sahel) -Mali, Niger	Contribution towards HDP assessment, action research, and knowledge co-creation

10. Monitoring and evaluation

Table 6. Results framework including indicators

Strategy of intervention	Key indicators	Target	Sources & means of verification	Assumptions & risks
Outcome 1: National level HDP actors understand the rationale and benefit of alignment and synergy in seed sector interventions	# of HDP actors reporting increased alignment and synergy in seed sector interventions	22	Project endline survey HDP nexus briefs	HDP actors see the value of nexus in the seed sector
Output 1.1: National HDP nexus mapping conducted	# of mapping conducted	4	HDP nexus mapping reports	HDP actors are supportive to share their programme data and information
Output 1.2: Governance mechanism that promote HDP nexus to facilitate the alignment and synergy in seed sector interventions at national level developed	# of HDP nexus mechanisms established at national level	2	HDP nexus event reports	Interest and commitment from local organisation to host the HDP nexus in seed sector
Output 1.3: Experiences on HDP nexus in seed sectors documented and shared	# of briefs documenting the experiences on HDP nexus in the seed sector	2	Topic briefs, project report	HDP actors are supportive to share their lessons and experiences on nexus
Outcome 2: HDP actors working on seed understand the principles, mechanisms and practices for transparent and accountable seed sector governance	# of pilot mechanisms evaluated as effective to contributing transparency and accountability in the seed governance	2	Project final report, project endline survey, study reports	Openness of HDP actors to participate in the pilot mechanisms
Output 2.1 Key issues and challenges impacting transparent and accountable seed sectors in FCS documented and shared	# of assessment conducted in selected fragile countries	3	Study reports	Key actors are willing to share their seed related programmes data and information
Output 2.2: Data, skills and technologies needs and interest of HDP actors assessed for various pilot mechanisms that promote transparency and accountability in seed sectors	# of HDP actors showing interest on piloting in selected fragile countries	8	Assessment reports	Key actors are interested to participate and contribute in the pilot mechanisms
Output 2.3: Lessons learned in different pilot mechanisms promoting transparency and accountability in seed sectors documented and shared	# of briefs published	2	Briefs, study report	HDP actors are supportive to share their lessons and experiences on different pilots

Strategy of intervention	Key indicators	Target	Sources & means of verification	Assumptions & risks
Outcome 3: Policy advisors and practitioners understand the benefits of adapted seed polices and regulations that are responsive to the development of seed sectors in fragile and conflict affected states	# of policy advisors and practitioners reporting increased access to policy and regulatory guidance responsive to FCS seed sector development	10	Project endline survey	Openness of seed policy advisors and practitioners to use the adapted seed policy toolkits
Output 3.1: Review of existing policies, regulation and guidelines and produce recommendation	# of seed policies, regulations and guidelines reviewed	2		Policy and regulatory documents are accessible
Output 3.2: Seed policy and regulatory guidance toolkit developed for policy advisors and practitioners	# of seed policy and regulatory tool kits developed	2	Toolkit document	Government and other key actors are supportive to the tool kit development
Outcome 4: HDP actors understand the opportunities and options for linking seed sector and seed governance to peace-building interventions	# of HDP actors reporting increased understanding the role of seed sector interventions contributing to peace building	22	Project endline survey	Openness of HDP actors to participate in the case studies
Output 4.1: Different seed sector interventions contributing to peace building analysed	# of case studies analysing the relationship between seed systems interventions and peace building	2	Master degree thesis, peer review journal paper, policy brief	Comparable farming communities are available for study
Output 4.2: Seed sector and seed governance attributes to positive peace-building identified	# of case studies analysing the attributes of positive peace-building	2	Master degree thesis, peer review journal paper, policy brief	Key actors are willing to share the data
Output 4.3: Opportunities and options for linking seed sector and seed governance to peace-building is documented and shared	# of research paper and policy brief published	2	Peer review journal paper, policy brief	Peer review journal paper published within the project period