

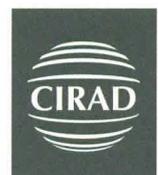


## Coraf Initiative

# Strengthening Research – Extension – Farmers' organisation linkages in West and Central Africa

## Field Study – The Gambia

A study prepared for CORAF, the UK Department for International Development, and  
the French Ministère de la Coopération



# Coraf Initiative

## Strengthening Research – Extension – Farmers' organisation linkages in West and Central Africa

### Field Study – The Gambia

A study prepared for CORAF, the UK Department for International Development, and  
the French Ministère de la Coopération

#### Team members:

Jeannot Engola Oyep, MINREST (Cameroon)  
Karim Hussein, ITAD Ltd (for ODI) (United Kingdom)  
Nicole Sibelet, CIRAD-TERA (France)  
Jean Zoundi, INERA, CORAF (Burkina Faso)

June 1999

This field study is part of the joint Franco-British research initiative concerning development-oriented agricultural research in West and Central Africa. It was commissioned by CORAF, and financed jointly by CORAF, UK DFID and the French Ministère de la Coopération. However, the analyses and the opinions expressed in this document are those of the research team alone and should not be attributed to the organisations financing this initiative.

# Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	4
RÉSUMÉ - SYNTHÈSE .....	11
ABBREVIATIONS .....	18
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	19
PREFACE .....	21
1. METHODOLOGY .....	22
2. NATIONAL CONTEXT	
2.1. Geography and population .....	23
2.2. National Agricultural Policy .....	24
2.3. Farming Systems and major products .....	25
2.4. Agricultural Extension and Research Systems .....	26
2.5. Farmers' organisations .....	30
2.6. Existing structures for collaboration between Research, Extension and other actors at different level .....	32
3. CASE STUDY: NARI AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANIMAL TRACTION TECHNOLOGIES FOR LOWLAND RICE FARMING SYSTEMS IN NDEMBANJOLA, WESTERN DIVISION	
3.1. Context	
3.2. Relation between Research, Extension and Farmers .....	38
4. CASE STUDY: PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE NYAMENG KUNDA APEX ORGANISATION AND ACTIONAID THE GAMBIA FOR SESAME SEED PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING	
4.1 Background .....	43
4.2. Physical context .....	44
4.3. Origins and activities of the Nyameng Kunda Apex organisation .....	44
4.4. Linkages with Research and Extension .....	47
4.5. Achievements of Nyameng Kunda Apex organisation .....	47
4.6. Problems experienced by the Nyameng Kunda Apex organisation .....	47
4.7. Overall assessment of Nyameng Kunda Apex organisation .....	48
5. SESAME GROWERS' ASSOCIATIONS AND CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES: ORGANISING FARMERS AND THE BIRTH OF A DYNAMIC FARMERS' MOVEMENT?	
5.1. Emergence of Sesame Growers' Associations .....	49
5.2. The emergence of the National Association of Women Farmers (NAWFA) .....	52
5.3. Linkage between CRS, SGA's and Research and Extension .....	53
5.4. Lessons .....	54
6. OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF LINKAGES BETWEEN AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH, EXTENSION AND FARMERS' ORGANISATIONS IN THE GAMBIA	
6.1 Summary observations .....	55
6.2. Observations .....	56
6.3. Ways forward for strengthening Research-Extension-farmer linkages for improved technology generation and dissemination .....	63
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	66
ANNEXES .....	68

## **Executive summary**

### **1. Background**

This country study is one of six country studies that have been undertaken by an international team of researchers (African, French, British) in the context of a CORAF, DFID, Ministère de la Co-opération financed study on strengthening research-extension-farmers' organisation linkages in West and Central Africa. Country reports have been written on Ghana, The Gambia, Cameroon, Guinea, Burkina Faso. A further study on Nigerian farmers' organisations was commissioned from a Nigerian consultant using a similar framework to that of the other country studies. An overview paper summarises lessons drawn from the country studies and overall recommendations for CORAF members. A literature review, an annotated bibliography and an approach paper have also been produced.

The core objective of the country studies was to analyse interesting case studies of partnerships between agricultural research institutions, extension, farmers' organisations and other civil society organisations that could provide lessons for other member NARS of CORAF

### **2. Methodology**

The core elements of the team's consultative methodology and approach can be summarised as follows:

- identification of case studies in collaboration with research institutes and NGOs;
- secondary literature review in Banjul (macro-economic context and legal-institutional framework);
- semi-structured interviews with key informants in Banjul from Departments of State, donor agencies, international non-governmental organisations, agricultural research and extension services;
- short (one day) field visits to case study sites in rural areas (Ndembanjola and Nyameng Kunda villages), using semi-structured interviews with officials of FOs, groups of farmers (members of FOs), and local extension and research staff;
- document review, analysis of results and follow-up meetings with key informants in Banjul;
- feedback to key officials of NARI.

### **3. The case studies**

Two case studies were analysed in depth by the team in The Gambia. First, the team analysed the linkages between ActionAid The Gambia (AATG) and the Nyameng Kunda Apex Organisation in Central River Division with regard to the promotion of sesame seed production. Second, the team studied the recent experience of the National Agricultural Research Institute working with a number of farmers in Ndembanjola, a village in Western Division, to develop and disseminate animal traction technology suited to lowland rice farming systems. These two case studies were selected in collaboration with the two institutions during a preparatory mission to Banjul undertaken by one member of the team in early October 1998. In addition, the team had the opportunity to learn about a third initiative which appears to be developing into a strong and dynamic national farmers' movement: the Sesame Growers' Associations. As the team was unable to meet members of this organisation, the analysis has remained brief.

The three initiatives relating to farmers' organisations that have been analysed in this report do not reveal strong direct relations between farmers' organisations and agricultural research in The Gambia.

The NARI case is a classic example of research collaborating with contact farmers in the T&V mode. The work of AATG with VDCs and CRS with new commodity-based farmers' organisations (SGAs) reveal that farmers' organisations do exist or are in the process of being created in The Gambia. Some of these organisations have the potential to represent farmer interests and to work directly with research and extension in the future (e.g. SGAs, NAWFA, and the Farmers Platform). This should be encouraged by current initiatives of GOTG to support decentralisation, coupled with NGO support for CBO capacity-building and attempts to create bodies that can represent farmers' organisations at the national level (e.g. NAWFA; the Farmers Platform).

However, the case studies presented here show that linkages between agricultural research and farmers' organisations are tenuous. Agricultural research does not yet work with farmers' organisations directly - it works with contact farmers. The Nyameng Kunda Apex Organisation and SGAs have had no direct linkages with research and have not reached the stage of formulating requests for research. The national-level farmers' organisations (NAWFA and National Farmers Platform) are still in the process of being formed and their potential for doing more than requesting external finances to support development initiatives is as yet untested. Finally, NARI itself remains to be persuaded as to the pertinence and efficiency of involving farmers or FO representatives in more stages of the technology generation and development process.

The cases of the Apex and the SGAs have been examined in order to assess the potential for these farmers' organisations to develop relations with research and extension in the

future. However, among the three cases studied here, NARI's work in the village of Ndembanjola represents the only example of agricultural research working directly with farmers in response to priorities expressed by farmers. The final conclusions of this report will focus on the lessons learnt from this experience, an analysis of obstacles to research and extension collaborating with FOs in The Gambia drawing on the lessons learnt from the study of the AATG and CRS experiences. Finally, some suggestions for improving research-extension-farmers' organisation linkages in the future will be made.

#### **4. Relations between research and FOs**

The approach of NARI remains based on the contact farmer model: the definition of research themes is undertaken by researchers and development projects (albeit with the benefit of information on farmer priorities drawn from participatory surveys); and on-farm trials, using and a few contact farmers are used to adapt technologies and pass information on innovations to farmers; technology is then transferred to farmers via extension agents.

NARI does not have much experience of working in direct partnership with farmers' organisations in The Gambia. Strong and autonomous farmers' organisations had not emerged until recently and their capacities to interact with research remain weak. NARI's work on animal traction for lowland rice farming is an example of conventional adaptive research, albeit based on a participatory needs assessment and a contract between LADEP and the community in question.

However, research institutes in The Gambia are willing to develop closer relations with local communities and involve them in more stages of the research process: NARI is now establishing annual PRA studies of farmers' constraints as a central part of its planning process and the President of the National Farmers Platform sits on NARI's governing board.

In summary, NARI seems to be observing the situation and is waiting to see whether emerging FOs could be effective partners. It is not yet convinced that it is efficient to involve FOs at all levels of the technology generation and dissemination process (e.g. definition of research themes). It believes that existing FOs need to have their capacities strengthened in order for them to be able to interact effectively with research (build literacy and capacities to propose their own solutions to the problems they face). On the other hand, NARI is very open to suggestions for new ways of collaborating with local communities and making research more demand-driven. It would only be able to move in this direction if resources were available to fund such linkages, however.

## **5. Research-extension linkages**

NARI's linkages with state extension services have been relatively strong. In the 1980's and early 1990's international assistance financed a project on research and extension linkages and until 1993, NARI operated as a "sister" department to extension under the DOSA.

There are a number of fora where research and extension meet and collaborate. For example, until recently NARI and DOSA extension staff have had Monthly Technology Review Meetings at the zonal level (northern and southern zone). However, such meetings have recently become less regular due to the phasing out of the ASP, which used to finance them. Further, there appear to be problems of feedback between research and extension at the Divisional level. Finally, there is concern that the research-extension linkages that have been built up with international financial support will deteriorate significantly in coming years due to the phasing out of ASP.

Currently, the LADEP project presents a good example of research-extension-farmer linkages. The project is using its project funds to foster these linkages by establishing contracts between the project and research, and between itself and local communities.

## **6. Role of NGOs**

International NGOs (particularly AATG and CRS) have played a significant role in the emergence of farmers' organisations in The Gambia. This role has both positive and negative aspects.

On the negative side:

- these NGOs have promoted farmers' organisations to serve their own agenda or mandate for agricultural development (e.g. sesame production, processing and marketing);
- the international NGOs they have acted as farmers' representatives at the national and local level. While this advocacy role has been important, the problem remains as to whether they can legitimately represent the demands or requests of farmers;
- there is a problem of FO dependence on NGO resources and support which could affect the sustainability of the organisations when such support ends.

On the positive side:

- in the absence of a strong farmers' movement in The Gambia, these NGOs have played a vital intermediary role between research and extension, and farmers;
- the two NGOs examined here have very close relations with NARI: CRS is represented on its finance committee and NARI provides specific research to CRS on the sesame sector; AATG has a representative sitting on the monitoring and evaluation committee of NARI;
- they have contributed significantly to the emergence of farmers' organisations (training and capacity-building), both at the national and local level;
- they are trying to address the problem of dependency.

## **7. Obstacles to developing stronger research-extension-farmers' organisation linkages in The Gambia**

Stronger linkages between agricultural research, extension and farmers' organisations are hampered by a number of factors:

- NARI is a young institution still in the process of finding an appropriate structure and approach to working with farmers. It is not convinced of the practicality or efficiency of farmers or FOs being involved in all stages of technology development.
- A recent phase of international financing for agricultural research and extension in The Gambia is ending in 1998. With ASP ending in 1999, there is great uncertainty concerning how to cover the operating expenses of VEWs (e.g. fuel) and costs of meetings between research and extension.
- Current lack of capacity of kafos and VDCs. Traditional *kafos* are strong and independent, but are widely seen to be an inappropriate level of organisation for the delivery of services to farmers or the organisation of production activities. The VDCs have been created by the Government to function in this way. However, these are young and often fragile organisations, although bolstered by official recognition. While, some VDCs seem to be strong and have their own internal dynamic, this may depend on the interests and capacities of individual leaders (e.g. Ndembanjola). This partly explains why research remains sceptical about collaborating with FOs, and why the research and extension systems have remained fairly top-down despite similar critiques in the 1980's.
- Farmers do not automatically see the benefits of forming groups or joining FOs. The SGAs and NAWFA have a concrete incentive to organise: a profitable commodity. The Platform may have more problems in demonstrating to members that it can serve their material interests.
- Youth and dependence of organisations established with the support of NGOs (SGAs; Nyameng Kunda Apex...).
- Loose relationship between research and NGOs. NGOs, such as AATG and CRS have close relations with research, but have not tried to develop contracts for services, an approach that has been successful elsewhere in West and Central Africa.
- Over-dependence of FOs on NGOs. The example of the Nyameng Kunda Apex organisation reveals that FOs established at the instigation of NGOs can easily become unsustainable when the NGO ceases to provide them with resources. FOs must emerge around a farmers' own perceived interests and need to have their own ways of raising funds. The CRS is helping SGAs to do this.
- Relative youth and weakness of farmers' organisations at the national level. The National Farmers Platform is only 2 - 3 years old and farmers at the local level are often

unaware of its existence or what it can do for them. NAWFA is not yet operational. Their potential impact remains to be seen.

- Poor appreciation by farmers' organisations of the contribution of research: Farmers' organisations that do exist have not yet seen the advantages that linkages with research can bring.

## **8. Ways forward for strengthening research-extension-farmers' organisation linkages**

The following measures should be taken to improve linkages between stakeholders for improved technology generation and dissemination.

- Make participatory research a reality. There is a clear desire on the part of NARI to encourage more farmer participation in agricultural research. However, relations between research and extension and farmers remain broadly top-down in reality. This could change if NARI concentrated more on analysing its own approaches to research: spreading the use of participatory research methods; working directly with farmers' organisations and their representatives.
- Build capacity of farmer's organisations and national farmers' movements. NARI does not feel it can collaborate with FOs until they demonstrate they have the capacity to work effectively as partners on research themes. Support from GOTG and international institutions for capacity-building of CBO's and FOs (e.g. in literacy, and planning solutions to their problems) needs to continue in order to create strong and sustainable farmers' organisations that will be able to effectively collaborate with research and extension directly. The initiatives of the CILSS in supporting the National Farmers Platform, of AATG on building the capacity of CBOs and of CRS in building the SGAs and NAWFA need continuing support over time.
- NARI should be more proactive in establishing partnerships with emerging national farmers movements. The VDCs do serve as the basic organisations with which research and extension should collaborate at the local level. However, other commodity-based organisations (such as the SGAs), and new national organisations (NAWFA and National Farmers Platform) may also be appropriate partners for research. NARI should try to establish contacts with these organisations in a proactive way, demonstrating to them in concrete terms through meetings and presentations what research has to offer to farmers. While, of course, it is for farmers' organisations to decide whether they have an interest in establishing relations with research, NARI should not simply wait to be approached by them as they may not be aware of what research has to offer them.

- Learning from LADEP. NARI could try to develop its own contracts with VDCs for research services. This would contribute to widening the reach and impact of NARI's activities.
- Include men as well as women in FO development and research-FO partnerships. All the case studies focus on working to resolve the agricultural problems of women farmers. Actors supporting agricultural development in The Gambia are very sensitised to the needs of women, often as a result of the interventions of international organisations (e.g. the World Bank supported WID initiative). This emphasis has had positive effects (women's empowerment; support to types of production traditionally carried out by women...) and is of undeniable importance. However, the negative effects of such an approach must not be ignored, for example: men are effectively excluded from managing some of the most promising FOs, the emerging SGAs (they are also evidently excluded from NAWFA); and the LADEP/NARI project in the lowlands focuses on adapting animal traction technologies for women rice farmers, when it is not at all clear that they will be able to make use of these technologies if men are not involved in the process. Men often need to be associated with such processes if they are to result in the effective diffusion of new technologies. Further, male farmers also need farmers' organisations to represent their interests.
- Financial support for research and extension linkages. It is essential that ways be found to continue and strengthen communications between research and extension after the end of ASP financing - perhaps through State funding or continued donor support.

## **Résumé - synthèse**

Cette étude s'inscrit dans le cadre d'une initiative de la Conférence des Responsables de Recherche Agricole en Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre (CoraF), appuyée par le Department For International Development (Dfid) du Royaume-Uni et la Coopération française. Elle vise le renforcement des liens entre la recherche, la vulgarisation, les organisations paysannes et la société civile, pour un meilleur développement des innovations agricoles dans l'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre. Elle a été réalisée par une équipe internationale de chercheurs (anglais, burkinabé, camerounais et français), qui est intervenue aussi dans quatre autres pays : Cameroun, Gambie, Ghana, Guinée. En s'appuyant sur la même problématique, une étude séparée a été conduite au Nigeria par un consultant nigérian. Un document de synthèse résume les leçons qui peuvent être tirées de ces études, et propose des recommandations aux membres de la Coraf. Une revue bibliographique, une bibliographie et une grille d'analyse ont également été réalisées.

Le principal objectif de ces études par pays était d'analyser des cas intéressants de partenariat entre les institutions de recherche agricoles, les services d'appui, les organisations paysannes et les autres organisations de la société civile de façon à fournir des leçons aux autres membres Snra de la Coraf.

## **2. Méthodologie**

Les principaux éléments de la méthodologie et de la démarche de l'équipe peuvent être résumés comme suit :

- identification des études de cas en collaboration avec les instituts de recherche et les Ong ;
- étude de la littérature à Banjul sur le contexte économique et l'environnement institutionnel ;
- entretiens semi-directifs à Banjul avec différents responsables des ministères, des bailleurs de fonds, des organisations non gouvernementales et des services de la recherche et de la vulgarisation ;
- courtes visites de terrain sur les études de cas (dans les villages de Ndembanjola et de Nyameng Kunda) avec entretiens semi-directif avec les responsables des organisations paysannes, des groupes de producteurs (membres des organisations paysannes) et avec les équipes locales de chercheurs et de vulgarisateurs ;
- rapport de synthèse, analyse des résultats et réunions avec les responsables à Banjul ;
- restitution aux responsables officiels de l'Institut national de recherche agricole, le NARI.

### 3. Les études de cas

Deux études de cas ont été étudiées de manière approfondie en Gambie. La première concerne une action de promotion de production de semences de sésame engagée par *Action Aid The Gambia* et une organisation de producteurs : « *Nyameng Kunda Apex organisation* » située dans la région de *Central River*. Dans le deuxième cas, il s'agit d'une expérience récente de développement de la traction animale adaptée aux systèmes de production de riz pluvial, et entreprise par le *National Agricultural Research Institute* – NARI – avec des producteurs du village de Ndembanjola, de la région Ouest. Ces deux études de cas ont été retenues avec les deux institutions nationales lors de la mission préparatoire, effectuée à Banjul par un membre de l'équipe en octobre 1998. L'opportunité s'est présentée d'étudier une troisième initiative qui apparaît traduire la dynamique d'organisation des producteurs de sésame : *the Sesame Growers' Associations*. Cependant, l'équipe n'ayant pu rencontrer les membres de l'association, l'analyse de cette organisation est restée succincte.

Aucun des trois cas étudiés ne fait apparaître de relations directes entre les organisations paysannes et la recherche. L'exemple des actions entreprises par le NARI avec les paysans illustre bien la démarche classique, de type « *training and visit* » adoptée par la recherche ghanéenne avec les groupes de paysans dits de « contacts ».

Les actions conduites par *ActionAid The Gambia* (AATG) avec les *Village Development Committee* (VDC) et les actions menées par le *Catholic Relief Services* (CRS) avec les nouvelles organisations de producteurs, *the Sesame Growers' Associations*, attestent de l'existence et de la dynamique de création des organisations paysannes en Gambie. Certaines de ces organisations (SGAs, NAWFA, et *the Farmers Platform*,) disposent de compétences suffisantes pour représenter les intérêts des producteurs et sont susceptibles dans un proche avenir de travailler directement avec la recherche et la vulgarisation. La mise en œuvre de dispositifs tels que l'appui à la décentralisation du gouvernement ghanéen, le soutien des Ong au renforcement des *community-based organisations* et la création de structures de représentation des organisations paysannes au niveau national (NAWFA; *the Farmers Platform*) devraient contribuer à cette évolution.

Cependant, les cas présentés montrent que les relations entre la recherche agricole et les organisations paysannes sont très faibles. La recherche ne travaille pas directement avec les organisations paysannes mais avec des groupes de contact. Les organisations telles que *Nyameng Kunda Apex* ou *the Sesame Growers' Associations* n'ont pas de liens directs avec la recherche et n'ont pas atteint un niveau de structuration suffisant pour formuler leurs demandes de recherche. Les organisations nationales de producteurs (NAWFA et *National Farmers Platform*) sont en cours de structuration, et n'ont pu, jusqu'à présent, aller au-delà d'une recherche de financement extérieur pour assurer leurs actions de développement. L'Institut de recherche NARI doit, lui-même, être convaincu de la pertinence et de

l'efficacité d'une participation plus large des organisations paysannes aux processus de création et de diffusion des nouvelles technologies.

Les organisations *Nyameng Kunda Apex* et les SGAs ont été étudiés pour apprécier l'aptitude des organisations paysannes à développer des relations avec la recherche et la vulgarisation. Or, parmi les trois cas étudiés ici, seules, les actions menées par le NARI dans le village de Ndembanjola offrent un exemple de collaboration directe entre la recherche et des producteurs sur la recherche de solutions aux contraintes des paysans. Les principales conclusions de ce rapport sont tirées de cette expérience. L'analyse des freins à une collaboration entre la recherche, la vulgarisation et les organisations paysannes s'appuie sur l'expérience de *ActionAid The Gambia* (AATG) et de *Catholic Relief Services* (CRS). Elles sont suivies d'un certain nombre de suggestions pour une amélioration possible des relations entre la recherche, la vulgarisation et les organisations paysannes.

#### **4. Les relations entre la recherche et les organisations paysannes**

L'approche de la recherche reste fondée sur un modèle classique. Les thèmes de recherche sont définis par les chercheurs et les projets de développement (informés, toutefois, sur les priorités des producteurs par des enquêtes participatives). Les essais en milieu réel sont réalisés avec des paysans « suivis » susceptibles de s'approprier les innovations et de servir de tremplin d'information. Les innovations sont alors diffusées par les agents de la vulgarisation.

Il n'existe pas, en Gambie, d'expérience de partenariat direct entre la recherche et les organisations paysannes, en raison, jusqu'à présent, de l'absence d'organisations suffisamment autonomes et solides et de la faible capacité d'intervention des organisations existantes. L'exemple des actions engagées par la recherche sur la traction animale en riz pluvial — bien que s'appuyant sur une participation dans l'évaluation des besoins et sur un contrat entre le projet de développement LADEP et la communauté villageoise —, relève d'une recherche adaptative conventionnelle.

Néanmoins, les instituts de recherche gambiens sont soucieux de développer des relations plus étroites avec les communautés locales et de les impliquer davantage dans les processus de recherche. Le NARI privilégie dans sa programmation des études de diagnostic participatif sur les contraintes des producteurs et le président du *National Farmers Platform* siège au comité de direction du NARI.

En fait, le NARI semble adopter une position d'observateur et attendre que les organisations émergentes montent leur capacité à devenir de véritables partenaires. Il reste réservé sur la validité d'associer les organisations paysannes aux différentes phases du processus de création et de diffusion des innovations (définition des thèmes de recherche, par exemple) et pense que les organisations existantes doivent tout d'abord renforcer leur pouvoir de

négociation avec la recherche (développement de l'alphabétisation et des aptitudes à proposer des solutions aux contraintes rencontrées...). Le NARI reste, néanmoins, largement ouvert à toutes propositions pour créer de nouvelles voies de collaboration avec les communautés locales et adapter la recherche à la demande, si toutefois des ressources sont affectées à la réalisation de ces orientations.

## **5. Les relations entre la recherche et la vulgarisation**

Les relations entre la recherche et les services nationaux de vulgarisation sont relativement étroites. Dans le courant des années 80 et au début des années 90, l'aide internationale a financé un projet de collaboration entre la recherche et la vulgarisation et jusqu'en 1993, le NARI est intervenu comme un département « frère » à la vulgarisation dans le cadre du *Department of State for Agriculture (DOSA)*.

De nombreux forums sont l'occasion de rencontres entre la recherche et la vulgarisation. Le NARI et l'équipe de vulgarisation DOSA tenaient, jusqu'à récemment, une réunion mensuelle de comptes rendus techniques au niveau régional (région Nord et Sud). Ces réunions sont devenues moins régulières depuis la suppression des *Agricultural Services Project (ASP)* qui les finançaient.

Le projet de développement LADEP constitue un bon exemple de relation entre la recherche, la vulgarisation et les producteurs. Le projet utilise ses fonds pour favoriser ces relations à partir de contacts entre, d'une part le projet et la recherche et entre le projet et les communautés locales d'autre part.

## **6. Rôle des Ong**

Les Organisations non gouvernementales (en particulier AATG et CRS) ont fortement contribué à l'émergence des organisations paysannes en Gambie. Cependant l'ampleur de leur rôle soulève un certain nombre de questions dont :

- la finalité de certaines Ong dont les actions auprès des organisations paysannes répondent davantage à leurs propres objectifs et servent à justifier leur mission de développement (production de sésame, transformation, commercialisation) ;
- la légitimité de la représentation des organisations paysannes par les Ong tant au niveau local qu'au niveau national ;
- la dépendance des organisations paysannes vis-à-vis des ressources financières des Ong et de leur survie en l'absence de ces financements.

Néanmoins le bilan des actions des Ong est positif sur de nombreux points :

- en l'absence d'une forte dynamique des organisations paysannes gambiennes, les Ong ont joué un rôle essentiel de relais entre la recherche, la vulgarisation et les producteurs ;

- les deux Ong étudiées ont établi d'étroites relations avec le NARI : le *Catholic Relief Services* (CRS) est représenté à sa commission budgétaire et l'institut lui fournit un appui sur filière sésame, un représentant de *ActionAid The Gambia* (AATG) siège au comité de contrôle et d'évaluation du NARI ;
- elles ont contribué de façon significative à l'émergence des organisations paysannes (formation et développement des capacités internes) aux niveaux local et national ;
- elles s'attachent au problème de la dépendance des organisations paysannes.

## **7. Obstacles au développement de liaisons plus importantes entre recherche, vulgarisation et organisations paysannes**

- Le NARI est une institution récente à la recherche d'une structure et d'une approche adaptée à une collaboration avec les producteurs, mais qui reste réservé sur l'efficacité et le réalisme de l'implication des organisations paysannes dans les processus de recherche développement.
- L'incertitude sur le financement des centres locaux de vulgarisation, — les VEWs, *village extension workers* — et des réunions de concertation entre la recherche et la vulgarisation, s'accroît avec la dernière phase du financement international pour la recherche et la vulgarisation de 1998, et la fin du projet *Agricultural Services Project*, prévu en juin 1999.
- La faiblesse actuelle des *Kafo* et des VDCs. Les *Kafo* sont des organisations traditionnelles, qui bien que solides et indépendantes, ont un niveau d'organisation inadapté à la mise en œuvre d'activités de services ou à l'organisation d'activités de production. Les *Village Development Committee (VDC)* qui ont été créés par le gouvernement pour assurer ces activités, restent fragiles malgré une reconnaissance officielle. Le dynamisme et la force de ces organisations dépendent largement des qualités individuelles de leurs leaders ; ce qui explique en partie les réticences de la recherche vis-à-vis des organisations paysannes et la persistance, malgré les critiques formulées depuis les dix dernières années, des démarches de type *top-down* suivies par la recherche et la vulgarisation.
- Le manque de mobilisation des producteurs : malgré une réelle volonté d'organiser une filière opérationnelle, le *Sesame Growers' Associations (SGA)* et la *National Association of Women Farmers (NAWFA)* éprouvent de grandes difficultés à convaincre leurs membres que leurs intérêts sont en jeu.
- L'inexpérience et la dépendance des organisations constituées avec l'appui des Ong.
- La déficience des relations entre la recherche et les Ong : les Ong telles que AATG et CRS ont noué des liens avec la recherche, mais n'ont pas cherché à les formaliser sous

forme de contrats de services comme cela a pu se réaliser partout ailleurs en Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre.

- La suprématie des Ong sur les organisations paysannes : l'exemple de *Nyameng Kunda Apex organisation*, montre que la pérennité de l'organisation peut rapidement être remise en cause avec les ressources de l'Ong dont elle dépend ; les organisations paysannes doivent pouvoir se construire à partir des préoccupations de leurs membres et trouver des solutions pour s'assurer un financement propre.
- La relative inexpérience et faiblesse des organisations paysannes au niveau national : *The National Farmers Platform* existe depuis seulement deux ou trois ans et son existence et ses attributions sont souvent méconnues au niveau local ; la NAWFA est peu opérationnelle ; les possibilités d'impact de ces structures restent à établir.
- L'appréciation défavorable des organisations de producteurs vis-à-vis des contributions de la recherche : les organisations de producteurs n'ont pas encore perçu les avantages qu'elles pouvaient tirer de leurs relations avec la recherche.

## **8. Des recommandations pour renforcer les relations entre la recherche, la vulgarisation et les organisations paysannes**

Dans l'objectif d'une meilleure diffusion des innovations, un certain nombre de mesures doivent être engagées pour favoriser les relations entre les partenaires.

- L'implication de la recherche doit se concrétiser. Si l'institut de recherche manifeste une réelle volonté d'encourager la participation des producteurs dans les processus de recherche, les relations existantes, sur le terrain, entre la recherche, la vulgarisation et les producteurs restent inspirées d'une approche descendante. Pour inverser cette tendance, la recherche doit remettre en cause ses propres démarches de recherche, développer des méthodes participatives et travailler directement avec les organisations de producteurs et leurs représentants.
- L'émergence et le renforcement d'organisations paysannes au niveau local et national doivent être soutenus. La recherche ne doit pas attendre que les organisations paysannes aient fait leur preuve et aient acquis des aptitudes de négociation pour mettre en œuvre des relations de partenariat. L'appui du gouvernement gambien et des institutions internationales aux *community-based organisations (CBOs)* et aux organisations paysannes doit être maintenu pour favoriser une dynamique paysanne forte et durable, capable de collaborer efficacement et directement avec la recherche et les services de vulgarisation.
- La recherche devrait davantage être à l'initiative de partenariats avec les dynamiques paysannes émergentes. Les *Village Development Committee (VDCs)* constituent des organisations de base avec lesquelles les services de la recherche et de la vulgarisation

devraient collaborer au niveau local. D'autres organisations de base (telles que les SGAs) ou les récentes organisations nationales (NAWFA et *National Farmers Platform*) constituent aussi des partenaires potentiels envers lesquels la recherche devrait jouer un rôle moteur dans l'établissement de relations en montrant concrètement (à travers des réunions et des démonstrations) ce que la recherche peut apporter aux producteurs. Même si le choix de l'intérêt ou non d'établir des relations revient aux organisations paysannes, la recherche ne peut être dans l'attente d'un engagement des organisations paysannes qui ne savent pas ce que cette dernière peut leur fournir.

- En tirant parti des expériences du *Lowland Agricultural Development Program* (LADEP), le NARI pourrait développer ses propres contacts avec les *Village Development Committee* (VDCs), ce qui permettrait d'élargir la portée et l'impact de ses activités.
- Les producteurs, aussi bien les hommes que les femmes doivent contribuer au développement des organisations paysannes et à l'établissement de partenariat avec la recherche. Les études de terrain, qui toutes accordent une place centrale aux préoccupations des productrices, illustrent, la forte réceptivité, sous l'effet probablement, de l'intervention des organisations internationales (WID soutenu par la Banque mondiale), des acteurs du développement rural aux besoins exprimés par les femmes. Cette orientation a eu des effets positifs (appui aux productions traditionnellement conduites par les femmes...) et un impact indéniable, mais a également eu des effets défavorables. Les hommes sont effectivement exclus de la gestion des organisations paysannes les plus prometteuses, des *Sesame Growers' Associations* en cours de constitution, ils sont également exclus, évidemment, du NAWFA. Le projet LADEP/NARI a centré ses actions sur les techniques de traction animale adaptées aux productrices de riz, alors qu'il n'est pas évident que les productrices soient capables de les utiliser sans la participation des hommes. Les hommes doivent être associés à ces innovations si l'on veut un tant soit peu leur diffusion. De plus, les producteurs ont également besoin d'organisations paysannes pour représenter leurs intérêts.
- Des appuis financiers doivent être trouvés pour assurer le maintien et le renforcement des relations entre la recherche et la vulgarisation après la fin du financement de l'*Agricultural Services Project* (ASP).

## **Abbreviations**

AATG	ActionAid The Gambia
ADB	African Development Bank
ASP	Agricultural Services Project
CF	Ministère de la coopération française
CILSS	Comité permanent inter-Etats de lutte contre la sécheresse au Sahel
CORAF	Conférence des responsables de la recherche agricole de l'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
D	Dalasi
DAC	Divisional Agricultural Co-ordinator
DAO	Divisional Agricultural Officer
DAS	Department of Agricultural Services
DEC	District Extension Centre
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DLS	Department of Livestock Services
DOSA	Department of State for Agriculture
FFHC	Freedom From Hunger Campaign
FO	Farmers' Organisation
GCU	Gambia Co-operative Union
GOTG	Government of The Gambia
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ITC	International Trypanotolerance Centre
LADEP	Lowland Agricultural Development Program
MTP	Medium Term Plan
NAWFA	National Association of Women Farmers
NARB	National Agricultural Research Board
NARI	National Agricultural Research Institute
NARS	National Agricultural Research System
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PSD	Programme for Sustained Development
SGA	Sesame Growers' Association
SMS	Subject Matter Specialist
T&V	Training and Visit extension system
VDC	Village Development Committee
VDG	Village Development Group
VEW	Village Extension Worker
WID	Women in Development Project

## **Acknowledgements**

The ODI/ITAD/CIRAD/CORAF research team carried out research in The Gambia from 25-31 October 1998 as part of the DFID/CF/CORAF-funded research project on «Strengthening Research-Farmer Linkages for Improved Technology Generation and Dissemination in West and Central Africa». The Gambia was one of five countries in which the team analysed interesting case studies of partnerships between national agricultural research systems, extension and civil society (farmers' organisations, non-governmental organisations, farmers, private sector etc.). Separate reports have been drawn up for the other four country field studies (Burkina Faso, Guinea, Cameroon and Ghana).

The team benefited from the strong logistical and technical support of NARI throughout its brief stay in The Gambia. Without this support it would have been impossible to carry out the study efficiently. The team wishes to extend grateful thanks to Dr Samuel BRUCE-OLIVER, Director of NARI, for his genuine interest in the study and the logistical support provided throughout the mission by his institute and staff. In addition, we are grateful for the advice and discussions provided by Mohammed KEBBEH (Head, NARI Socioeconomics Programme) and his colleagues, Musa SUSO and Mr F. MANNEH, who also assured interpretation of farmers views.

During its stay in The Gambia the team studied the experiences of ActionAid The Gambia working with the Nyameng Kunda Apex Organisation in Central River Division. The team is grateful for time it spent with a number of officials of Action Aid: Mr Ousman CHAM in Banjul, and Mr Lammin NYANGADO in Bansang and Mr Idrissa KORETA in Nyameng Kunda. Their interest in the study, their openness and their availability were very appreciated. It also thanks Action Aid The Gambia for its logistical support: in particular, providing a vehicle to bring together the members of the Apex Organisation for a meeting with the team, and acting efficiently as our interpreters when required.

More generally, the team would like to thank all the members of the Ndembanjola VDC and the Nyameng Kunda Apex Organisation that spent many hours with them, patiently answering all our questions. Without this willing participation our work would have been impossible.

We are grateful to the many informants in Government Ministries and international organisations in Banjul who assisted us in understanding their relevant interventions in The Gambia, and the overall legal and institutional framework. There are too many individuals to list here, but their names are listed in the Annexes. We also are grateful to the PPMU

Library Documentation Centre of the Ministry of Agriculture, Banjul, where we were able to locate many critical documents with ease.

Lastly, the team would like to thank the different institutions that have contributed funds for this study for their constant support. More specifically, we extend our thanks to the Executive Committee of CORAF, the UK Department for International Development and the French Ministère de la Coopération for providing financial support for this study. However, the views expressed in the report are entirely those of the team members and should not be attributed to those organisations that have supported the study.

## **Preface**

This field study has been undertaken within the framework of the initiative taken by CORAF, in collaboration with UK DFID and French Ministère de la Coopération. The objective of the Initiative is to strengthen the linkages between research, extension, farmers' organisations and other civil society organisations for improved generation and dissemination of innovations in West and Central Africa.

In order to describe the nature of these linkages, the project's research team chose to undertake studies in five countries of West and Central Africa: in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, The Gambia, Ghana and Guinea. The analysis and related conclusions are presented in the five country reports, of which this is one.

In addition, an annotated bibliography containing more than 300 references, on this subject has been prepared by ODI and CIRAD. This work has contributed to a literature review, which presents the project's analytical framework and an overview report.

Before entering into detailed presentation of the case studies - which are the focal point of this work - it is essential to make one important point. A short study mission in a country cannot claim to take full account of the diversity of situations that exist. Rather, it is when all the conclusions of the five country studies, along with the studies referred to in the annotated bibliography, are taken together that we should be able to move towards considering a set of recommendations that can be debated by CORAF.



## **1. Methodology**

Two case studies were analysed in depth by the team in The Gambia. First, the team analysed the linkages between Action Aid The Gambia and the Nyameng Kunda Apex Organisation in Central River Division with regard to the promotion of sesame seed production. Second, the team studied the recent experience of the National Agricultural Research Institute working with a number of farmers in Ndembanjola, a village in Western Division, to develop and disseminate animal traction technology suited to lowland rice farming systems. These two case studies were selected in collaboration with the two institutions during a preparatory mission to Banjul undertaken by one member of the team in early October 1998. In addition, the team had the opportunity to learn about a third initiative which appears to be developing into a strong and dynamic national farmers' movement: the Sesame Growers' Associations. As the team was unable to meet members of this organisation, the analysis has remained brief.

The core elements of the team's methodology and approach can be summarised as follows:

- secondary literature collection and review, focusing on establishing the macro-economic context and the legal-institutional environment within which farmers undertake agricultural activities in The Gambia (eg national agricultural policies and institutions; decentralisation; legal framework for farmer organisation);
- semi-structured interviews with key informants in Departments of State, multilateral and bilateral donors, international organisations, agricultural research institutions and extension services etc. at the national level. These interviews aimed to involve all relevant actors and stakeholders in the research process;
- field visits of one day each to Nyameng Kunda and Ndembanjola to discuss the assessment of experiences of partnership with all the actors involved in the two cases. The core objective of this stage was to interview farmers involved in the farmers' organisations under study (women and men; those touched by the intervention and here possible; some local farmers not directly involved in the process); this was carried out using semi-structured group and individual interviews; local officials involved in providing services to

the farmers' organisation were also interviewed. In each of the case study locations the team had the opportunity to consult relevant documentation at the local level in order to complete secondary information gathered at the national level;

– a final phase of analysis of results and feedback to key officials in the National Agricultural Research Institute in Banjul. These focussed on themes drawn from the study's analytical framework and outline plan used for each country field study.

Due to time constraints, a priority was placed on meeting farmers and therefore it was not possible to organise a larger workshop to feed back results before the team's departure. The approach was as participatory as possible within the time constraints of a six-day field visit.

## **2. National context**

### **2.1. Geography and population**

The Gambia consists of a narrow strip of land, some 400 km long and 30 km wide. Except on the Atlantic coast, it is surrounded on all sides by Senegal. Its ecology is predominantly drought sahelian shrubland. In fact, the climate is subtropical, with a dry season from November to May. Analysis of long-term data series indicates that annual average rainfall has been declining steadily over the past 25 to 30 years (FAO 1997). The Gambia belongs to Permanent Inter-States Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (or, in French, CILSS standing for Comité permanent inter-Etats de lutte contre la sécheresse au Sahel).

With an area of 11 000 km<sup>2</sup>, and a population of 1.042 million (1993; with a projected 1.60 million by the year 2010), the population density of 96 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> (1995), makes The Gambia a densely populated country by African standards. The country's high population growth rate of 4% per annum has been identified as one of the major constraints to development (FAO 1997).

According to the 1993 Population and Housing Census, over half of the labour force (50.6%) are engaged in crop production. Of this proportion, 60% have not attained any level of education. The Gambia has very low levels of literacy, with certain regions and groups (e.g. women and girls) being particularly affected. As many as 76% of people aged 15 years and over in The Gambia were illiterate; 88% of females of the same age bracket were illiterate (see UNDP 1997).

Per capita income in The Gambia was \$ US 260 in 1990 and \$ US 337 in 1995. The Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) sector provides employment for over 75% of the population, contributes about 19% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and generates almost 85% of foreign earnings (FAO 1997).

## **2.2. National Agricultural Policy**

Until the 1980's, the ANR sector contributed up to 40% of GDP. In the 1990's, this good contribution plummeted: to 20% (1990-1991), 22% (1991-1992), 18% (1992-1993), 19% (1993-1994) and 21% in 1994-1995 (compared with an average of 60% for services and 15% for tourism during the same period)<sup>1</sup>. The drop in the ANR sector's contribution to GDP has been primarily due to the inability of farmers and the private sector to withstand the shocks of Government's structural adjustment policies, and deteriorating climatic conditions (FAO, 1997).

Post-independence national economic policy centred largely on the agricultural sector. In the early years of independence, agricultural development policy was geared towards the promotion of the main export crop, groundnuts, which accounted for over 95% of the nation's export earnings. By the mid-to late 1970's, it was apparent that existing policies were not conducive to viable economic growth and as shown above, ANR contribution to GDP was declining. A major policy re-orientation was initiated in 1985 when government embarked on an Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) supported by the first World Bank Structural Adjustment Loan (SALSAR 1). The general aim was to improve financial performance by reducing government expenditure and increasing earnings through the promotion of agriculture and other productive sectors of the economy. However, the Programme did not have expected positive influence on farmers' incomes. The collapse of world-market prices for groundnuts wiped out the benefits of the depreciation of the Dalasi. However, many farmers were able to diversify their agricultural production and developed non-farm activities. By 1988, the Government, taking into consideration uncertainties regarding the traditional export market for groundnuts in Europe, had adopted a policy promoting diversification away from groundnuts. At the same time it reviewed its national agricultural policy. The Programme for Sustained Development (PSD), launched in 1990, called for economic development based on a free-market economy. Under PSD, the policy is to promote the domestic production of crops for which The Gambia has a comparative advantage: mainly rainfed production of coarse grains, groundnut, and swamp rice; and the expansion of high-output activities such as horticulture and poultry industry (FAO 1997).

The National Agricultural Policy is now based on development goals of improved nutritional standards in rural areas, increased cash crop production, increased food security and diversification of the agricultural base, including the livestock, fisheries and forestry subsectors (FAO 1997).

The main implications of implementing the structural adjustment programme on farmers' production are the liberalisation of credit and inputs distribution, the removal of subsidies on inputs. Input prices and prices for agricultural products are also market determined.

---

<sup>1</sup> Tourism was virtually non-existent until the 1970's. The re-export trade to Senegal and other neighbouring countries has in the past few years been booming, contributing significantly to GDP. With the 50% devaluation of the CFA franc in January 1994, the future of this activity seems bleak.

Initially, agricultural credit to small farmers was provided chiefly by The Gambia Co-operative Union (GCU). GCU experienced severe problems and repayment rates declined to unacceptable levels. With the launching of Economic Recovery Programme, in 1985 and the Program for Sustainable Development in 1990, several formal institutions were either privatised or phased out. Thus, GCU is no longer involved in addressing rural finance needs. Financing seasonal inputs appears to be a key constraint for the smallholder farmer, despite the presence of international NGO's and the existence of an informal credit market. Within this framework, village savings and loan associations are being encouraged (e.g. Village Savings and Loans Associations, launched in the 1980's) (World Bank, 1992)<sup>2</sup>.

## **2.3. Farming systems and major products**

Of the 1.04 million ha of land in The Gambia, over half is classed as arable. About 178 560 ha is currently used for the production of rainfed annual crops.

### *2.3.1. Farming systems*

The predominant production system is traditional shifting, slash and burn cultivation, which requires a substantial area for fallow and recovery. The increasing population pressure is gradually reducing the fallow period, leading to more continuous cropping and soil degradation.

There are three main agro-ecological zones in The Gambia: the sahelian zone (where the lack of rainfall makes rainfed crop production extremely difficult); the sudano-sahelian zone (which has more surface water and a higher average rainfall, with greater reliability from year to year); the sudano-guinean zone (where the average rainfall is generally higher, and in some areas may exceed 1 000 mm/year).

The short wet season (July to October) limits production to one crop per year. Crop rotation is practised. Use of chemical fertilisers is minimal due to high cost (following removal of subsidies) and increasing risk in rainfed upland farming. Use of animal traction (oxen, donkeys and horses) is increasing and at present, over 95% of the coarse grains and groundnut area is prepared using animal traction (FAO 1997). Throughout the country, mechanisation is high. With the exception of the Western Division, at least two-thirds of farmers in the country own at least one seeder or weeder (DOSA 1998b). In general, animal traction is more used in upland areas than in lowland ones.

---

<sup>2</sup> VISACAS were created in 1988 through external interventions by French ONG-Centre de Développement et de Recherche (CIDR), with funding from the German Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW). VISACAS have been highly successful in building-up people's capacity to manage their own small village banks, mobilizing savings and ensuring credit recovery. That experience is also ongoing in some other African countries like Cameroon.

Farming activities undertaken by men and women are generally more separated in lowland villages, where mutual assistance between men and women is less common and where women spend more on farming than do those in upland villages. In upland farming, there is a considerable amount of labour exchange, with men often helping women with the heavier tasks such as land clearing and when animal traction is used for ploughing, planting and weeding. Women, in turn, provide most of the labour for harvesting and are responsible for post-harvest processing of cereals, one of the most time-consuming and arduous tasks performed by rural women (World Bank 1992).

### *2.3.2. Major products*

Some 58% of the cultivated land is under cereal crops: mainly millet, sorghum, maize and rice. Rice is the staple food and accounts for 25 to 30% of total cereal production. Groundnut is the main cash crop for farm populations, and the prime agricultural export item, comprising 74% (in 1995; compared to 95% in 1988) of the agricultural exports and 38% of AGDP, and occupies more than 40% of the cultivated land. Other cash crops are cotton, sesame (a recent development) and horticultural crops. An expanded urban and tourist industry concentrated on the coast provide a ready market for horticultural produce.

The livestock subsector accounts for 24% of total agricultural production in real terms, and contributes 4.7% of GDP (FAO 1997). Fisheries account for only 3% of GDP.

Forestry provides more than 85% of the domestic energy (fuelwood) and about 17% of the timber (service woods) needs of the population.

In 1995, over 90% of meat and fish came from domestic production but cereals (principally rice, the country's staple diet) came from importation and domestic production in almost equal quantities, making The Gambia one of the countries in the Sahel region with a serious national food security problem.

## **2.4. Agricultural Extension and Research Systems**

### *2.4.1. The Extension System of The Gambia*

Crop and livestock extension services are the responsibility of the Department of Agricultural Services (DAS) and the Department of Livestock Services (DLS), respectively; both are departments of Department of State for Agriculture (DOSA).

At the divisional and district level, extension is supervised and implemented by six Divisional Agricultural Officers (DAO's) and 25 District Extension Centres (DEC's). Each DAO consists of a divisional agricultural co-ordinator (DAC), subject matters specialists (SMS's) and training officers (TO's). At the village level, the extension system relies upon village extension workers (VEW's) who use contact farmer groups and other group methods.

In recent years, the Gambian extension system has adopted the principles of the World Bank's Training and Visit (T&V) approach to extension.

Since 1972, the Gambian extension system has been supported by five major, internationally-financed projects: (i) the Agricultural Development Project (US\$1.3 million); (ii) the Rural Development Project (US\$11.7million); (iii) the Agricultural Development Project II (US\$9.4 million); (iv) the Women in Development Project which has an agricultural component (US\$7.0 million); and (v) the Agricultural Services Project (US\$12.3 million) jointly funded by IFAD (World Bank 1992).

Of these, the Agricultural Services Project (ASP) has had a significant impact on building the capacities of farmers, and on linking research and extension. ASP is a 5-year project being implemented by the Department of State for Agriculture (DOSA) and the National Agricultural Research Board (NARB). This project began in 1994 and is scheduled to end in June 1999. The main components of the projects are:

- strengthening natural resources/agricultural sector analysis and planning ;
- consolidating, improving and strengthening agricultural extension services covering crop and livestock production and natural resources management;
- improving and strengthening the Gambian agricultural research system and modest support to the Agricultural School of The Gambia College ; and
- promoting self reliance: farmer empowerment through pilot activities in one administrative Division (Central River Division) that test new approaches to farmer participation and self management in the areas of irrigation water management, rural savings and loans, training of rural entrepreneurs, and rural social infrastructure.

The ASP also includes some capacity-building measures (functional literacy training, planning techniques...) which contribute to their ability to form effective organisations, to express their interests and to work with research, extension and other actors.

As regards the extension service, a mid-term evaluation of ASP (DOSA/IFAD/World Bank 1997) concluded that, on the positive side, "*...the Livestock Department (DLS) has successfully introduced to farmers technologies, such as improved animal husbandry practices for sheep and poultry over the last four years... The DAS has been less dynamic, and slow in promoting new technologies. Nevertheless, some promising technologies were taken up by the farmers, such as row seeding of rice, composting, soil conservation, and rainy season vegetables'.. On the negative side, the same report stated that "... a remaining problem is that farmers themselves are too little involved in the development and dissemination of technologies, information and skills. A new relationship with farmers, farmer groups and organisations, the private sector, and NGO's needs to be developed that works with farmers as partners and builds on their strengths'* (DOSA/IFAD/World Bank 1997). This problem is a long term one: studies in the 1980's had noted the lack of farmer

and civil society participation in technology generation and dissemination in The Gambia and various projects were aimed at resolving this situation.

Apart from extension structures of DOSA, there are other support extension services sponsored either by NGO's (for instance Catholic Relief Services in promoting sesame) or by specific projects and private agencies (for instance The Gambia Groundnut Council, the Lowland Agricultural Development Project...).

In addition to the projects cited above, the Lowland Agricultural Development Project (LADEP) is of central importance to this study. LADEP a 20 year programme covering traditional rice ecologies throughout The Gambia. It is funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the African Development Bank (ADB). The immediate objectives of the programme are: to establish a national policy and institutional framework for lowland agricultural development; development of approximately 5 600 ha of lowland rice areas through application of appropriate soil and water management techniques and agronomic practices; improved access for approximately 2 375 ha of tidal swamp; and strengthening of community based organisations concerned with land and water management in projects sites. LADEP has three main components:

- preparation of a National Masterplan for Lowland Development;
- agricultural development;
- farmers' organisations / community development.

#### *2.4.2. The National Agricultural Research System of The Gambia*

The NARS in The Gambia is dominated by the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI). This institute conducts adaptive/applied client-oriented research on crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and other natural resources to provide technological solutions to the problems faced by producers. It also informs policy makers on options to increase agricultural productivity and production without detriment to the natural resource base of environment.

NARI is a young institution - established only in 1993. Prior to this date, the Gambian agricultural research system relied primarily upon the Department of Agricultural Research (DAR) in the Department of State for Agriculture. NARI took over from DAR's activities. NARI is under the supervision of the National Agricultural Research Board (NARB).

NARI has ten discipline and/or commodity based research programmes: (a) cereals programme; (b) cropping systems and resource management programme; (c) agricultural engineering programme; (d) socioeconomics programme; (e) horticulture programme; (f) seed technology management programme; (g) Grain, Legumes and oil seeds programme; (h) Pest management programme;

(i) fisheries programme; and (j) agro-forestry programme. Livestock research, which is part of the Institute's mandate, is absent because of the lack of expertise within the Institute. For the moment, it is contracted to the DLS.

It is important to underline that the socioeconomics programme's activities cut across all of NARI's other programmes. It works principally on participatory research and technology development. It is responsible for assessing farmer constraints through the use of participatory rural appraisal techniques and cost benefit analysis of new technologies developed by research. It therefore plays a key role in involving farmers in the technology generation and dissemination process.

Like extension, Gambian agricultural research has been backed by foreign donors through a number of projects for instance ADP-II, ASP, and LADEP.

Under the agricultural development component, LADEP is financing an adaptive research and technology development sub-component to be contracted to NARI. Different NARI programmes are supported by LADEP under a long-term framework agreement, but specific research initiatives are subject to yearly review<sup>3</sup>. LADEP also supports work by other institutions such as the NGO Freedom From Hunger Campaign (FFHC).

In 1996, the FAO analysed the Gambian NARS and established a strategy for its long and medium term development. The analysis pointed out that the 55 scientists in the NARS are under employed for many reasons, including: a highly fragmented NARS; market imbalances and inefficient use of resources; inexperienced research personnel; and inadequate national control of the NARS. The weakness in human resources represents a significant impediment to broadening research activities and improving the relationship between research and development (FAO 1997).

The long and medium-term plans for national agricultural research are characterised by:

- a relatively modest expectation of resources;
- research activities better balanced according to major agro-ecological zones, by production sector, by theme and by scientific discipline;
- the strengthening of the relationship with development, which should result in the creation of a multidisciplinary research centre in each of the major agro-ecological zones. In particular, each centre would have a multidisciplinary team focusing on farming systems. These would serve as a privileged interface between the specialised research teams and public and private development organisations in these zones (FAO 1997).

However, the funding required for the five-year medium-term plan (MTP) has not yet been secured.

---

<sup>3</sup> The first contact between LADEP and NARI has been signed in 1997 for one year. LADEP will decide to continue supporting that experience if achievements are promising.

## 2.5. Farmers' organisations

Farmers' organisations exist, but are not yet very dynamic in The Gambia. With the dissolution of The Gambia's Co-operative Union (the apex institution previously charged with distributing financial and material inputs at rates acceptable to farmers, and concerned with commodity production and marketing for some 150,000 members) in May 1998 some observers have noted the creation of «a vacuum in the institutional landscape of the rural sector» (DeCosse 1998b: 4). However, in addition to formally registered national NGO's (with those active in rural areas numbering around 80), a number of important farmers' organisations exist or are emerging in The Gambia.

Basically, four types of organisations exist in rural areas. First, *kafo* groups exist in every village. These are traditional groupings based on age-sets, gender and/or common interest (such as household food security, social support etc.). *Kafo* in Mandinka<sup>4</sup> means «let's come together» and all *kafo*'s are expected to promote unity and co-operate closely in all community activities. These groups can include people from different ethnicity's who organise themselves to achieve common social or economic objectives, and there are often several different *kafo*'s in each village. They can be of varying sizes and the membership and composition of *kafo*'s can change over time, but they remain often very strong organisations. Each *kafo* has a chairperson and a number of members with specific responsibilities within the organisation. Activities focus on village-level cooperation, labour exchange and mutual help when members are in suffer crises. These groups exist without any need for specific legislation to formalise their existence. However, in recognition of the importance of the *kafo* system, government departments do not usually work with individuals but through *kafo*'s when they wish to work with producers at the village level. Further, donors have realised recently the importance of traditional groupings and recognised their potential for self-management and sustainable indigenous development. Thus, most agricultural development projects comprise an organisational development component. Nonetheless, farmers tend to want to avoid carrying out remunerative production activities through the *kafo*'s due to fears of poor management of group finances, and loss of assets or profits.

Second, there is the Village Development Committee (VDC) or, as it is often referred to, the Village Development Group (VDG). These have been given a Mandinka name: *Satee kafo*. VDC's were established as a result of the initiative of the GOTG's Department for Community Development in the late 1970's to early 1980's. The objective was to create a village level organisation that could represent the interests of the whole community (all genders and ethnicities), but one that was founded on the traditional organisational framework at village level. This would then become the primary point of entry at the local

---

<sup>4</sup> One of the five main ethnic groups of the The Gambia (others are Wolof, Fulani, Jola and Sararuli).

level for external (State, projects or NGO) development assistance and interventions. Community Development Workers from the Department of Community Development train and support VDC's in such issues as community planning techniques. The officials of the VDC are chosen by a meeting of villagers and these officials select a president to represent them. This person cannot be the traditional chief (who is elected by the village founders and has government-recognised authority over a number of villages), nor the village head (or *Alkalo*)... Rather, the VDC is accountable to these traditional leaders. The president is usually male and someone with an interest in the broader economic development of the village. The majority of VDC leaders and members in the past have been male. While there are no clear rules about gender representativity, a number of training initiatives coupled with the effects of the Agriculture/Institutional Building component of the World Bank/Government of The Gambia - supported Women in Development (WID) project, have resulted in a greater equilibrium between male and female members of VDC's. While the VDC president is still typically male, his deputy is now usually female. Thus the VDC's constitute an externally introduced form of organisation that is nonetheless fairly representative of village populations and integrated with traditional authorities. As a result of the local government reform process (begun in 1997) VDC's will have to register formally and will be legally recognised as the prime channel through which external development interventions should pass.

Third, a number of recently formed producer organisations (e.g. maize growers association, Sesame Growers' Associations (SGA), livestock producers association) and local NGO's exist with their own structures and specific sectoral objectives. These are often built on a framework that recognises the fundamental importance of the traditional *kafo* or VDC organisation.

Fourth, and finally, there have been two recent attempts to create national level organisations that represent farmers.

On the one hand, there is the National Farmers Platform whose emergence was initially supported by CILSS. This organisation has been constituted from representatives (one male and one female) drawn from each village of The Gambia, which have elected District and then Divisional representatives. In 1996 a National Level Executive Committee was elected. While potentially an important player in agricultural development in the future, this is still an emerging organisation in the process of establishing objectives and strategies: it held its first full national meeting in February 1997 (see DeCosse 1998b). At present, the same author has observed that this Platform needs to focus on one or more catalytic issues to assist its members in forming an identity. However, the leaders of the Platform are focusing their efforts on the more immediate need to raise resources to enable the organisation to function (transport to allow representatives to meet regularly with farmers at village level and with each other, an office and secretariat etc). Without these basic resources Platform leaders feel that it will be impossible to build an active and united farmers' movement that

is able to bring the views and requests of its members at village level to the attention of its leaders, so that they in turn can present these effectively to actors at the national level. In a positive development, the Catholic Relief Services in The Gambia have recently provided the Platform with a small grant towards its activities aimed at building farmer awareness of its existence and role.

On the other hand, Catholic Relief Services has separately promoted the establishment of the National Association of Women Farmers (NAWFA), formally established in 1997. NAWFA is intended to give a national voice to the numerous Sesame Growers' Associations (SGA's) that have emerged in The Gambia since 1989. These organisations represent women farmers only. NAWFA, like the National Farmers Platform, is still in the process of being structured. Both have been supported (and are somewhat dependent on) with external resources (advice, logistics and financial support). Further, there has been an element of competition between the two movements that may prove damaging to their ability to represent farmers in the long term. The Platform feels that its role is to represent *all* farmers at the national level – including female sesame growers. However, the establishment of NAWFA appears to create a competitor national organisation to represent women farmers' only. Both of these organisations have been established with external assistance (financial, training etc). For them to be sustainable they will need to establish a strong membership base and ways of directly raising funds. NAWFA may prove more successful in doing this as it derives some funds from SGA's.

## **2.6. Existing structures for collaboration between Research, Extension and other actors at different levels**

Linkages between research, extension and farmers' organisations are generally weak in The Gambia. This is due to the weakness of farmers' organisations, and the absence of an effective national level farmers' organisation. However, internationally-funded projects have supported and maintained linkages between Research and Extension. Within the framework of the ASP, Research-Extension-Farmer-Input/Market-Linkage System (REFILS) principles are applied. The main elements of the system include: Technology Review Meeting (TRM) ; Monthly Training (MT) ; Research Task Forces ; National Synthesis Workshop ; Extension Research Tours ; On-farm trials and ; Diagnostic Studies to identify farmers' production constraints.

This system stipulate meetings between research, extension and farmers in view of strengthening linkages between those three stakeholders in generation and dissemination of technology in agriculture. The general willingness of researchers and extension agents to collaborate in this way in demonstrated at several levels. For example, researchers attend the TRM's to provide training to extension agents in new techniques. However, due to financial constraints the statutory meetings scheduled by ASP often do not take place.

NARI recognises the need to have closer collaboration between research and extension at the local level. As part of this process, task forces including representatives from research, extension and other partners have recently been created to review research results and make recommendations to improve the diffusion of research results.

Currently, the main linkages between research and extension are through ASP and LADEP. The fact that the main linkages are dependent on internationally-funded projects is largely due to the high costs of meetings: projects are required to provide funds for transport and fuel for agents to meet. With the imminent end of the ASP, for example, monthly TRM's are already becoming less frequent (taking place every few months). Given the severe limits on the availability of Government funds it appears that if project-related funding ceases the quality and frequency of linkages will rapidly deteriorate to the detriment of the technology generation and dissemination process.

Further, even in the existing framework, farmers (and the emerging national farmers' movements) are not adequately represented. It remains critically important that ways be found for farmers to make their voices heard. As the mid-term evaluation of ASP pointed out: *"...there is a need for better and more in-depth diagnosis of farmer constraints, and greater involvement of farmers at all stages of technology development. Particularly, farmers should be involved in the early phases of technology development (diagnosis of constraints, early on-station technology screening and design of on-farm trials)"* (DOSA/IFAD/World Bank 1997).

In addition, if the capacities of the emerging national farmers' movements (Platform and NAWFA) continue to grow, and they continue to be represented in existing or future structures for linking research and extension, they will become partners through which research and extension can increase farmer participation in the process. However, the current context of uncertainty regarding funds to support existing linkages could make it difficult to persuade research and extension to move further in this direction.

### **3. Case study: NARI and the development of animal traction technologies for lowland rice farming systems in Ndembanjola, Western Division**

#### **3.1. Context**

##### *3.1.1. Physical and social environment*

Ndembanjola is a village of some 400 inhabitants situated in Western Division, The Gambia. The area benefits from a reasonable average annual rainfall of about 800mm (1990-1994). The farming population of the Division was estimated to be 177 225 in 1997.

The major crops cultivated by farmers in Ndembanjola on both upland and lowland ecologies are rice, long cycle millet, sorghum, *findo* (*digitaria exilis*), cowpea, groundnuts and sesame. Farmers also carry out market gardening, producing aubergine, onion, peppers and tomatoes for sale. As in most of The Gambia, rice is the main staple food. Lowland rice is produced primarily for consumption as it is rare for farmers to produce amounts surplus to home consumption requirements.

Lowland ecologies are characterised by heavy, clayey soils that are difficult to work. The continued usage of simple hand tools in land preparation is a significant constraint on production. While donkeys and horses can be used for traction on the more fragmented upland soils, stronger oxen are required on these heavier soils. About 32% of *dabadas*<sup>5</sup> in Western Division possess at least one draft horse or donkey. 41% of *dabadas* possess at least one seeder or weeder. The general level of ownership of traction animals and equipment in Western Division is low compared to other Divisions of The Gambia - for example, elsewhere in the country at least two thirds of *dabadas* own at least one seeder or weeder. Indeed, a recent government assessment stated that 'Western Division and Lower River Divisions are generally characterised by considerably slower rates of adoption of new technologies... and lower levels of farming mechanisation'(DOSA 1998b:3). Finally, women have very limited access to animal traction.

Three organisations exist in the village: the VDC (with some 176 members); divided into one men's *kafo* (with 130 members); and one women's *kafo* (with 46 members). The VDC carry out limited farming activities together: sesame production and sale with support from Catholic Relief Services. The men's *kafo* carry out some farming activities together and hire out their labour during the rainy season. The women's *kafo* is a general self-help group: they cultivate one sesame field together, work for each other and help members when they are sick.

### 3.1.2. *The innovation: animal traction and lowland rice cultivation*

Both male and female farmers produce rice. However, men grow rice on upland farms, with the large majority using animal traction (often using donkeys rather than more expensive cattle) for ploughing, weeding and sowing. Rice cultivation in the lowland areas is almost exclusively undertaken by women farmers without the use of animal traction. Since the 1960's animal traction technology has been widely used for upland rice cultivation in The Gambia. The animal traction technology in use in these areas spread into The Gambia from Senegal.

---

<sup>5</sup> *Dabada* is the working unit within a rural household or family. It is usually engaged in both crop and livestock production, primarily using the *dabada* labour force, but occasionally using supplementary labour from the *kafo* - whether hired or reciprocal. The average size of a *dabada* in Western Division was estimated in 1997 to be 13, with roughly equal numbers of men and women in each *dabada*.. According to recent government statistics there were some 13162 *dabadas* in 314 villages in Western Division in 1997 (ROG 1998).

The basic implement by used for ploughing the heavy, clayey soils of the lowland rice cultivation areas remains the traditional long hoe (or *ebaraye* in Jola)- a labour intensive hand implement. However, animal traction is used in lowland farming in Senegal. Gambian farmers would have been aware of the wide use and availability of traction technology from Senegal, and therefore non-adoption is likely to have been the result of farmers not finding the technology appropriate for lowland rice cultivation. Among explanations of non-adoption offered are: the heaviness of the soils in lowland areas of The Gambia; the weakness of N'Dama cattle in relation to the weight of the standard plough and the heaviness of the soils; and complex constraints on women adopting animal traction (e.g. limited access to implements and oxen). The adaptive research being carried out by NARI under LADEP aims to alleviate the labour constraint for land preparation (ploughing and harrowing) in this lowland rice farming system, thereby encouraging increased production.

The adapted single mouldboard plough, lightened for use with the relatively small N'Dama cattle, was introduced in The Gambia in the 1980's. Since then, some further adaptations to the technology have been made by agricultural engineers to improve its suitability to the soil conditions of the lowland farming system. However, the vast majority of lowland rice farmers have still not adopted the technology even though farmers identify lack of implements and animal traction as the main constraints to lowland rice production. There are a number of reasons behind this reluctance to adopt animal traction. First, the plough is seen to be too heavy for the women farmers to guide effectively, particularly when making the animal turn at the end of a line. Second, cattle (the required draft animals due to the heaviness of the soils and their ability to work in water) are very expensive (currently, some 2 500-3 000 Dalasi per head). In Ndembanjola, for example, only two women possess cattle in a village with a population of about 400. Third, in families where cattle are owned, these cattle are traditionally kept, fed and watered and guided by men, with women having limited access to cattle only after they have been used on upland farm.

### *3.1.3. Institutional context*

A number of institutions have been involved in the generation and diffusion of animal traction technologies for lowland rice cultivation (table I).

The agricultural engineering division of NARI began working on the feasibility of adapting the traction technology for use in the lowlands in 1995 at its Sapu research station following a participatory needs assessment undertaken by LADEP (funded by IFAD, ADB and the Government of The Gambia). The needs assessment led to the development of a Community Action Plan between LADEP and villages. One element of the CAP was the need to develop animal traction for lowland rice farming and this became an element of the contract signed between LADEP and NARI in February 1998 (see Annex 3). LADEP extension agents were involved in the needs assessment; their role is otherwise confined to extending the technology if the trials prove successful.

NARI has since been involved in modifying and adapting animal traction implements for use in lowland ecologies. Funded by a contract with LADEP, the first on-farm trials of the adapted technology began in July 1998 in Ndembanjola with two contact farmers identified by NARI. These two farmers had already been working with research in previous years, testing new crop varieties on other fields. At the same time, an FFHC is carrying out similar trials in the Lower River Division under contract to LADEP.

No farmers' organisation has been directly involved in the process. NARI is employing a largely classic on-farm trials approach focusing on individual contact farmers: NARI identified fields according to agro-ecological criteria relevant to LADEP and employed contact farmers it already knew for on-farm trials, providing them with free seeds, inputs and implements. Contact farmers receive a small income for certain cultivation activities and also keep the harvest. The exception in this process was the identification of farmers needs via a participatory needs assessment required by LADEP: this assessment involved farmers, researchers, extension agents and NGO's working in the lowlands. This identified the lack of traction as the major constraint to increased lowland rice production, providing justification for the research on this theme. In the absence of a strong farmers' movement, however, NARI still focuses on collaborating with a very limited number of individual contact farmers in the technology development process.

However, it is interesting to note that the VDC has started to appropriate the process. The president of the VDC is married to one of the contact farmers. Its members have become involved in monitoring the trials and in assisting in certain tasks in the contact farmers' fields. Finally, at key stages of crop growth VDC members are invited to observe activities in the test fields.

**Table 1.** Case Study: Animal traction technology for Lowland Rice Farming systems, Ndembanjola, Western Division.

<b>Overall objectives</b>	Since 1995, the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) has worked on the adaptation of animal traction technology at its Sapu research station (Bansang area). The Lowland Agricultural Development Project (LADEP) funded by IFAD, ADB & the Government of The Gambia, made a request to NARI for adaptive research for animal traction technology for women rice farmers. For this issue a contract was signed by LADEP and NARI in 1998, and on-farm adaptive trials are being conducted in the village of Ndembanjola.
<b>Scale</b>	2 women contact farmers in the village of Ndembanjola, Western Division of The Gambia
<b>Period of implementation</b>	Since 1995, NARI has conducted on-station trials to adapt the implements to local conditions (heavy soils and relative weakness of local draft animals) and to women's need for a lighter plough. From about 39 Kg weight, adaptation lead to the development of a lighter plough (25kg) more suited to the clayey soils of the lowlands. In 1998, on-farm adaptive trials were initiated with two women in Ndembanjola village, according to the contract signed by LADEP & NARI.

<p><b>Civil society organisations involved</b></p>	<p>Individuals farmers are involved in the process. The Village Development Group (or <i>satee kafo</i> in Mandinka, based on traditional pre-existing village level interest groups called <i>kafo</i>) has become indirectly involved, with its members assisting in tasks in the trial fields, observing the results and sharing the lessons.</p> <p>Only individual farmers have been involved directly. The Extension (LADEP) through the contract signed with NARI has helped the farmers to access to the technology (oxen and implements). However, it appears that the VDC has subsequently appropriated the process – a process assisted by the fact that its leader has worked with NARI for several years.</p>
<p><b>Public sector organisations involved</b></p>	<p>Research: NARI (conducting on-farm trials)                  Extension (through LADEP): Extension identified farmers' needs, expressed them to the research and provided funds.</p>
<p><b>Links between contact farmers, FO's and research</b></p>	<p>The two individual farmers are directly involved in the process and have contractual links with research. They conduct the on-farm trials and demonstrations and give their feedback to research. Contact farmers are paid a small wage for the use of their fields and for certain tasks; they are also provided with inputs. Through these contact farmers other farmers of the <i>satee kafo</i> acquire knowledge on the use of the technology, and some of them have tried the technology on their farms.</p>
<p><b>Appropriation of the innovation by farmers</b></p>	<p>The technology is still at the stage of trial. According to the results of these trials, LADEP will proceed to examine the conditions for better dissemination of the technology. For instance farmers (both male and female) anticipate that the major constraint for the dissemination of the technology will be lack of cash to buy oxen.</p>
<p><b>Overall assessment of the partnership</b></p>	<p>The partnership involved NARI and LADEP on the basis of a contract to be renewed annually. This agreement was signed in February 1998, and so it is too early to make any assessment. At this stage, only a few farmers play an important role in conducting the trials and demonstrations. However, the process of adapting the technology was the result of formal and participatory surveys undertaken for LADEP at the inception of the project and hence farmers did have an opportunity to express their technology needs.</p>
<p><b>Perspectives for the future</b></p>	<p>The technology still needs some adaptation before being disseminated. This process of adaptation will require more time (than one-year trials) and replication in other villages. It is necessary for LADEP and NARI to take this into account.</p> <p>Others actors could and should be involved in the process to increase its chances of success, for example: the private sector (for the reproduction and sale of the implements); farmers' organisations (helping farmers to have access to credit facilities and spreading knowledge of the benefits of the technology...) can create better conditions for the future dissemination of the technology. In order for farmers to be interested in adopting the technology, more attention must be given to the issue of the high cost of oxen, and to proving that animal traction will contribute to a significant increase in productivity, hence providing lowland farmers with excess rice that they can market. Without this prospect, and in the absence of subsidies or credit options, lowland rice farmers are unlikely to adopt animal traction technology. Finally, NARI could try to work with the VDC as a group so as to benefit from the interest that it has in the development and dissemination of the technology, and broaden the impact of adaptive research.</p>

## **3.2. Relations between Research, Extension and farmers**

### *3.2.1. Nature of linkages*

In Ndembanjola, there are three farmers who have worked and are working with research and extension agents on a number of projects. One of these is the VDC leader who has been involved in on-farm trials with research since the early 1990's. While the work is on their individual fields, they advise other villagers on the technologies they are using and on the results of trials undertaken on their farmland. However, research has not tried to work with the VDC as a group.

Two of the three farmers referred to above, the two women, were the contact farmers selected by NARI following the signing of the research contract with LADEP. They were selected according to the following criteria: the suitability of their fields for tests of animal traction for lowland rice cultivation (soils, rice production etc); and the accessibility of fields. Researchers approached individual farmers after identifying suitable plots for the on-farm trials planned. One NARI research assistant works with farmers on their plots, supervising preparation of fields, providing training and advice at all stages of rice cultivation. As noted in section 2.6 above, several fora have been created to reinforce research-extension linkages and interaction in The Gambia, but are currently suffering from resource constraints. Here, this problem is not apparent as the animal traction project benefits from the support of LADEP-funded extension agents at village level.

It is clear that the level of farmer involvement in the process is limited and often functional. After the establishment of research priorities (a result of a participatory needs assessment in the LADEP area) farmer participation has been limited to a small number of contact farmers, who are given material incentives to participate in research trials closely managed by NARI. Farmers have been involved as individuals in various stages of the development of the traction technology in question: the initial participatory needs assessment and, indirectly, identification of research priorities; and, following the adaptation of the technology, in the testing of the innovation. However, it remains to be seen if any future attempt to disseminate the animal traction technology will be successful on the basis of such limited participation of farmers in the region. On the other hand, the fact that NARI has been associated with participatory approaches to establishing farmer priorities is in itself a positive sign. If the project proves successful, there is an indication that research may attempt to spread the use to participatory approaches and increase farmer involvement at other stages in the research process.

### *3.2.2. Results of linkages*

Contact farmers in Ndembanjola and other villagers appreciate the opportunity of working directly with NARI. Specifically, they cite the following advantages of having on-going contacts with research:

- it has advised on and demonstrated a number of technologies which make farm work easier and more productive (e.g. row seeding; use of improved varieties; use of the single mouldboard plough and animal traction in lowlands);
- it has demonstrated a number of time-saving technologies which farmers would like to have the opportunity to adopt: animal traction in particular drastically reduces the time needed for ploughing, planting, and weeding;
- they expect to see a higher rice yield as a result of adopting animal traction in lowland rice production - although as this is the first year of testing they are not able to assess if the harvest has improved. A preliminary assessment should be possible at the end of this season as the test field has been divided in two to facilitate comparison: with oxen used on one half and the long hoe on the other.

However, discussions with Ndembanjola farmers point to a number of key constraints that could prevent them widely adopting the technology in the longer term:

- first, and most important, the availability and price of the new implements once they are perfected by researchers, and the price of oxen: most farmers (women in particular) do not expect to be able to afford to buy these without the provision of credit;
- second, women have particular problems in accessing credit;
- third, unless there is a significant increase in rice yields it will be uneconomical for farmers to invest in improved technology and oxen - especially as rice is grown for home consumption rather than for sale;
- fourth, the social organisation of farm labour indicates that men will remain responsible for the upkeep of draft oxen owned by women, and that they are likely to retain first call on oxen for their upland fields (see also Kebbeh 1997).

It is really too early to assess whether the technology will be successfully diffused and adopted by lowland rice farmers since the adapted implements are not yet generally available – an upstream supply problem that will only be resolved after the trials have proven the success of the adapted technology. One farmer said he had begun using traction in the lowlands as a result of observing the contact farmers, but this does not demonstrate that there will be a broader sustained adoption of the technology. Further, if appropriate support is made available to farmers to access the new traction technology, it is likely that the third constraint will be addressed as traction should enable farmers to plant more hectares with rice, therefore increasing production and income.

### *3.2.3. Lessons and suggestions to improve the liaison between NARI, extension and farmers*

Farmers - in particular men - have used animal traction in their upland fields for a number of years. The challenge for LADEP and NARI in Ndembanjola has been to establish suitable technologies to enable and encourage female lowland rice farmers to adopt animal traction in replacement of their traditional hand tools (a need that was expressed strongly in the

original LADEP participatory assessment). Many studies have highlighted the problems surrounding adoption of traction for rice farming, for example: lack of credit; tradition and attitudes concerning women's role in rice farming; physical strength required to handle oxen and guide plough; lack of knowledge regarding how to use the single mouldboard plough; low availability of inputs; low returns to investment; poor coverage of farmers by extension services; and risk of theft of oxen. These issues preventing adoption are important. However, here the analysis is restricted to indicating a limited number of preliminary lessons and conclusions regarding the process of NARI working with farmers.

### **Involvement of farmers**

#### **in establishing research priorities and in the research planning process**

In a new departure for NARI, the priority to undertake research into this theme resulted from a participatory needs assessment in the LADEP area, leading to a community action plan which highlighted the need for adaptive on-farm trials of animal traction technologies. Thus, the research programme was established in response to farmers' own priorities in the area. The LADEP project also required NARI to focus on constraints faced by women farmers.

However, since the needs assessment, the approach to the development of the innovation has been fairly classic: the development of a technology by engineers and researchers, followed by on-farm adaptive trials with the expectation that this will then lead to a perfected technology ready for diffusion and adoption. NARI officials are not convinced of the pertinence and effectiveness of involving farmers or their representatives in all stages of the technology development process. Particularly in the stages of developing technical solutions to constraints they face.

However, elsewhere in West Africa, an increasing emphasis is being placed on the importance of involving farmers' organisations in formulating research and extension priorities, but also involving them in a dynamic way in the all aspects of the research process up to and including the diffusion of innovations and the assessment of the results of the process. This is facilitated by the representation of farmers on the governing boards of agricultural research institutions (e.g. Guinea, Mali) and by the existence of contractual relations between agricultural research and farmers' organisations (e.g. Burkina Faso). The process has begun, with the Platform president and CRS being represented on its board. However, NARI could ensure more on-going and meaningful participation of farmers if it established such contractual relations directly with either VDC's (at the local level) or with the emerging farmers' movements (at the national level).

#### **Social constraints on the adoption of traction by women for rice cultivation**

Social constraints on women using animal traction in their rice fields are known in The Gambia. As already noted, women are responsible for lowland rice cultivation, which is their contribution to household food supply. Women have no right to own draft animals or equipment, but they do have the right to request the use of these from men. The male family

head does not have an obligation to contribute his animals or equipment for rice cultivation. While this constitutes an obstacle to women accessing the technology, observers do not see this as a major obstacle to adoption in its own right.

Nonetheless, some measures could attenuate these social constraints to women accessing animal traction technology. For example, male family heads could be involved more directly in the on-farm trials to encourage them to support adoption through use of their labour and draft animals in women's rice fields. The potential economic benefits of increased lowland rice cultivation would need to be emphasised in order to encourage these to participate. If and when they see significant increases in rice yields as a result of using the adapted technology they may work to increase women's access to traction technologies.

### **Contact farmers and farmers' organisations**

Farmers were officially involved only as individuals in the research process. The focus is on contact farmers in the hope that by working with these few there will be a multiplier effect as other farmers see the advantages of their neighbours using the technology. This approach is seen as the only one feasible for a small agricultural research organisation such as NARI. Further, dynamic farmers' organisations capable of formulating requests from research are rare in The Gambia. The major flaws in this contact farmer approach are the small number of farmers involved, and the fact that it is NARI that approaches farmers known to them as «able to work with research and extension effectively», rather than farmers approaching research to resolve a «felt need».

However, in this case the VDC is involved indirectly, through its own choice. This indicates the VDC's interest in representing the community and its potential to act as an effective intermediary between research and individual farmers in future research initiatives. NARI could build on this experience by seeing if VDC's or other farmers' organisations (e.g. Sesame Growers' Associations) in other regions have an interest in working with research to resolve specific production constraints that affect the group. If there was such an interest, it could then seek funds to support such a partnership on the basis that the results of research would be likely to have a greater impact.

### **Overall assessment of research process and partnership with farmers**

The involvement of NARI in developing animal traction technology for women rice farmers in Western District is effectively a partnership between NARI, a development project that is the intermediate «client» of the research (LADEP) and individual farmers. Farmers' needs are primarily taken into account through contact with LADEP extension agents.

The technical suitability of animal traction technology for the Gambian environment has been demonstrated by the high rate of adoption of animal traction for upland farming (some 95% of farming in the uplands is carried out using animal traction). The adapted technology for use by women farmers in the lowlands is still at the early stages of development and

testing, however. It is not yet being manufactured for wider dissemination as further adaptations may be required in response to farmers' assessments and constraints.

The contract between NARI and LADEP is very recent (February, 1998). The contract covers six specified research themes that include 'animal traction research and development' and 'swamp rice research and development' (see Annex 3). The LADEP project will last 20 years and the research agreement with NARI covers this period. The specific contract for adaptive research into animal traction technology is valid for a duration of one year – renewable if satisfactory progress is being made (according to a yearly evaluation procedure). While LADEP is not interested in supporting long term and academic research, this framework does ensure that such applied research will only be allowed to continue if it produces practical results. However, the contracts could be improved by specifying more stages of collaboration between research, extension and farmers/farmers' organisations: from stages of experimentation and on-farm adaptive trials to the broad dissemination of the technology.

While LADEP has agreed criteria for monitoring and evaluation with NARI, researchers should also be explicitly involved in monitoring and evaluating the process over time to learn how best to adapt technologies to farmers' needs.

NARI is working with only 3 contact farmers in Ndembanjola, and with only 2 women on this particular project. The scale of the intervention is tiny and this in itself may have a negative impact on future stages of the experimentation and diffusion process.

As noted, the research process analysed here has been essentially linear and top-down after the initial participatory needs assessment carried out under the auspices of LADEP. Researchers state they have been '...trying to push' early maturing varieties of rice and early work in rice fields (before other fields) to try and improve yields. They have been unable to explain the non-adoption of animal traction in lowland rice farming, and yet have expended resources in trying to get the technology adopted. They support this approach with the free provision of inputs and by providing a small income to contact farmers. This appears to be a classic technical approach to resolving farmer constraints..

A holistic approach that centres on responding to farmers needs, expressed by their chosen interlocutors, taking account of social organisation and norms, and involving farmers' representatives more in the management of the research process could yield better results. For example, in this case adoption is likely to depend on:

- women gaining greater access to traction equipment;
- rice yields and areas cultivated increasing significantly as a result of using animal traction;
- the price of the adapted implements being affordable when they reach the stage of dissemination;
- farmers finding a way to pay for the technology (e.g. if credit will be made available to women farmers to purchase oxen/traction equipment); and
- the use of the technology being time-saving to women farmers.

In order to overcome the significant social and economic constraints to adoption noted above, it would seem appropriate to: a) involve male family heads in the on-farm trials, encouraging them to contribute their labour and traction equipment; and b) carry out the adaptive research work directly in collaboration with the VDC and the two *kafo's* in the village, not simply with individual contact farmers. However, the real challenge remains to move away from the top-down definition of research themes and activities.

The approach to assessing the suitability of the technology seems to be overly technical. Despite the fact that research has chosen to directly work with women farmers in testing the technology, inadequate attention is being paid to addressing the known social and economic constraints to women adopting the technology. Further, if NAWFA develops into a strong national and regional organisation, direct collaboration between research and NAWFA may achieve more success in addressing social / gender constraints to adoption. This can only happen in the medium to long term, however.

NARI is a relatively young national research organisation and it is seeking ways in which to strengthen links between a variety of actors, farmers' organisations and farmers. The collaboration with LADEP and women contact farmers in Ndembanjola is a start. There is a need to involve more civil society organisations and the private sector in the process of developing the innovation and its future dissemination. Learning from neighbouring countries in the region, NARI should aim to work more closely and directly with farmers' organisations so as to increase chances of the development of appropriate technologies. This could be done via contracts between NARI and VDC's, for example. In the absence of other strong farmers' organisations, the village *kafo* or VDC can be initial points of contact between farmers and research, as the example of Ndembanjola illustrates. However, if stronger commodity-based groups emerge through the establishment of the National Farmers Platform and NAWFA these may prove to be better partners for research and extension.

## **4. Case study: partnership between the Nyameng Kunda Apex organisation and ActionAid The Gambia for sesame seed production and processing**

### **4.1. Background**

The case of the Nyameng Kunda Apex organisation (recently renamed Nyameng Kunda Kambeng Kafo) is presented here as an example of an attempt to build a viable farmers organisation around the objectives of producing and marketing sesame. The organisation has no direct links with agricultural research institutions. However, there have been indirect links with research over the years (e.g. NARI's provision of sesame seeds through the intermediary of the Catholic Relief Services (CRS)). ActionAid The Gambia (AATG) participating in NARI committees). Further, the evolution of this regional organisation is

interesting in the context of the general weakness of the farmers' organisation movement in The Gambia. It offers lessons that have been taken on board by other attempts at building effective farmers' organisations (specifically, the development of Sesame Growers' Associations: see section 5 below). It also contributes to our assessment of the potential for research and extension to work with such organisations in the future.

## **4.2. Physical context**

Nyameng Kunda village - where the Apex Organisation is based - is situated in Central River Division South. In this area, as elsewhere in The Gambia, the main crops are upland and lowland rice, groundnuts, early and late cycle millet, maize, sorghum, *findo*, and cassava. Most are grown primarily for household consumption, though a portion of produce is also sold to satisfy household cash needs. In CRD South, maize and early millet are the most popular field crops with swamp rice and cassava occupy more fields than sorghum and upland rice. *Findo* is a minor crop (MANR 1997).

Sesame is also produced in the area, mainly by women farmers, but it is not a traditional crop in the area. Sesame production began following the years of drought in the early-1980's and subsequent fall in groundnut production, and the introduction of sesame in The Gambia by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in the mid-1980's (see section 5 below). Sesame production and sesame oil processing has been supported by the interventions of AATG since the early 1990's. It is of interest to women farmers due to its many potential uses (household consumption, sale, processing into cooking oil etc.), and its low labour requirements during cultivation. Groundnut production remains more important however.

The annual rainfall in this Division averaged 723mm between 1990-94. The area has a high rate of adoption of animal traction. Some have explained that this may be due to the presence of The Gambia's only agricultural research station in the Division and the high number of development projects located in CRD-South (DOSA 1998b:3). However, the average annual per capita income in the Division is \$230 and the region is thought to be experiencing a relative scarcity of suitable arable land.

## **4.3. Origins and activities of the Nyameng Kunda Apex organisation**

### *4.3.1. ActionAid The Gambia (AATG)*

AATG began work in the Bansang area in the early 1980's. AATG has a decentralised structure, with the Bansang area being covered by its DA3 (rural development area 3) office. AATG's support to the DA3 region is substantial: in 1997, AATG spent £440,000 on its project interventions (AATG 1997).

This international NGO traditionally maintained a special focus on supporting the improvement of child welfare through classic project interventions (centrally planned set of packages aimed at addressing broad problems of poverty) mainly in the fields education and agriculture. More recently, AATG diversified its activities into seven inter-linked problem areas: literacy, agriculture, environment, income generation, health, water and institutional development. Projects in these areas were still implemented sectorally and AATG attempted to provide all the resources required to solve identified community problems - overlooking the community's own capabilities and resources «thus encouraging dependency» (AATG 1998:2).

However, by 1991 AATG had shifted the emphasis of its interventions to the support of child welfare through broader community development programmes developed in direct collaboration with rural communities. This approach was enshrined in its «Community Based Management» methodology. This approach aimed to involve community-based organisations (CBO's) in defining priorities and managing interventions, while introducing the concept that interventions by AATG would eventually be phased out, leaving CBO's to manage them. The CBO that functions as AATG's entry point into every village is what it refers to as the Village Development Group (VDG) - synonymous with the VDC. AATG is currently encouraging the VDG's that it works with to register with the Attorney General's Chambers so that they become legally recognised organisations.

#### *4.3.2. Emergence of the Nyameng Kunda Apex*

It is in this context that AATG supported the emergence of the Nyameng Kunda Apex organisation - the first trans-community institution with which AATG worked. The Apex was formed by 48 sesame-producing VDG's in the region in 1991 around the objective of purchasing a sesame-milling machine for use by its sesame-growing VDG members. This machine was purchased with a contribution from the VDG's and a larger contribution in the form of a loan from AATG (see table below). While the idea of forming the Apex originated from the VDG's in an effort to obtain assistance to buy a milling machine, the actual process of forming the organisation involved AATG closely: VDG leaders approached local AATG staff for assistance and were told that they needed to organise themselves and raise a cash contribution from members first, then approach AATG for a top-up loan. AATG extension workers actively encouraged the formation of this broader association in order to permit AATG to provide this loan, as AATG would not lend to individuals. Hence, with support from AATG facilitators and extension agents, the Apex was formed.

While the Apex originally formed solely around the production of sesame it has recently begun to use its funds to support small enterprises.

The Apex is managed by an Executive Committee (President, Cashier, Secretary, Advisers - who are often *Alkalos*) elected from the leaders of 5 clusters of VDG's - each of which represents some 13 VDG. The clusters were intended to facilitate management and support the Executive Committee. Cluster leaders are selected by VDG leaders, who themselves are

selected by consensus at a general village meeting. Each cluster has a: President, Secretary, Treasurer and sometimes advisers. However, members of the Executive are elected for an indeterminate period, which has led to some problems.

**Table II. Case study: Nyameng Kunda Apex Organisation in Bansang area, Central River Division-South.**

<b>Type of organisation</b>	Nyameng Kunda is a trans-community organisation formed from Village Development Groups (VDC's). It is a membership organisation, established in 1991.
<b>Keys objectives</b>	The overall objective is to improve the living standards of the population. The specific objective is to ease the problems of sesame production and marketing.
<b>No. members</b>	Nyameng Kunda Apex has about 4,000 members and covers 48 villages in Bansang Area, Central River District South.
<b>Initiators</b>	Nyameng Kunda Apex is formed from VDC's. Catholic Relief Service (CRS) successfully worked to promote sesame production in the area. In order to find solutions to some agricultural problems (e.g. production and processing of sesame), leaders from VDC's approached ActionAid The Gambia (AATG) and extension services for some support. AATG advised them to organise themselves as this was the route to accessing to any support. The initial need of the Apex was a milling machine, and a proposal was forwarded to AATG in February 1991.
<b>Range of activities</b>	The major activities of Nyameng Kunda Apex are : – helping farmers for inputs supply; – processing and marketing of sesame. AATG helped the organisation to acquire a milling machine Currently, the Apex is diversifying its activities: it is disbursing small amounts of credit to support members' small enterprises.
<b>Source of funding</b>	Contribution of members (initial contribution of D10 125). Funds generated from milling fees (at least D10 000 before serious operational problems were experienced with the milling machine in early 1993). Milling machine purchased with AATG top-up loan of D33 000.
<b>Nature of linkage with research and extension</b>	Nyameng Kunda Apex has no formal relations with NARI or with the extension services of DOSA. However, the organisation has strong relations with AATG, which provides extension support. Nyameng Kunda Apex was the first trans-community organisation with which AATG worked. Some members of this organisation participate in meetings organised by AATG on the latter's invitation.
<b>Problems experienced</b>	The Nyameng Kunda Apex was faced with many problems since the milling machine provided by AATG suffered a number of mechanical breakdowns. Several VDC's became discouraged with the affairs of the Apex organisation. The lack of transparency and alleged mismanagement of funds by the leadership sped up the retrogression process, and the organisation fell into dormancy.
<b>Perspectives for the future</b>	Initiatives to re-activate the organisation have recently been initiated, drawing on lessons from an evaluation of the organisation carried out by AATG's Policy and Research Department in early 1998. For the future, the Apex has plans to: diversify its own income generating activities through investments using their trust funds and saving accounts (built up primarily through the milling operation): increase the groundnut seeds business; become involved in the purchase and sale of fertilisers, and rice, etc... However, in order to survive the organisation it needs to be strengthened.

#### **4.4. Linkages with Research and Extension**

As indicated in Table 2, despite the fact that NARI's only research station is based nearby at Sapu, there are no direct linkages between the Apex organisation and NARI. Sesame growers only indirectly benefit from contacts between agricultural research and CRS: testing of sesame seed varieties and selection in the 1980's; NARI advice to the private company responsible for sesame marketing (see section 5). AATG carries out no agricultural research.

AATG provides the main source of extension services to Apex members and VDG's in the area. There are no formal, on-going relations with the Divisional extension agents (DAO's) of DOSA. AATG extension agents have consulted farmers on the sesame varieties they prefer, have distributed sesame seeds and given some advice on storage issues. If AATG's own staff are faced with agricultural problems they cannot resolve they do approach DAO's on an *ad hoc* basis. However, it is clear that AATG itself functions as the main source of external agricultural knowledge and advice for collaborating VDG's and the Apex. For example, AATG's office staff purchase improved varieties from suppliers and AATG's agricultural officer selects appropriate crop varieties for AATG to disseminate in its project areas.

#### **4.5. Achievements of Nyameng Kunda Apex organisation**

The achievements of the Apex since its establishment have been modest. In summary:

- the Apex managed to bring VDG's together to approach AATG for assisting in the purchase of a sesame milling machine;
- the Apex originally acted as a conduit for the distribution of sesame seeds to individual farmers;
- it provided a milling service that was closer to farmers than before, reducing travel time etc.;
- the milling activity led to the generation of some income (fees for milling sesame) that the Apex may now invest in other activities.

#### **4.6. Problems experienced by the Nyameng Kunda Apex organisation**

The Apex has suffered numerous, serious problems that have raised the fundamental question of whether the organisation is sustainable. Some of these problems were revealed in a recent evaluation of the organisation conducted by AATG (Fofana *et al.*, 1998). Others were raised by Apex Executive Committee members themselves.

The milling machine - which was purchased by AATG second hand - experienced a number of mechanical breakdowns. This drained the Apex of financial resources and the mill is no longer in operation due to the expense of repairs.

The Apex executive became isolated from the membership due to: a lack of transparency in decision-making; alleged mismanagement of funds; a lack of consultation between members; a total breakdown in communication between leaders and membership.

As the member villages are situated far apart from each other, it has been difficult to arrange meetings without the logistical support of AATG. This has contributed to communication problems.

Marketing problems for sesame - due to the lack of regional markets for agricultural produce and poor roads.

Executive committee members also complain of a general lack of cash to undertake development activities and a lack of farming implements required to undertake new production activities.

#### **4.7. Overall assessment of Nyameng Kunda Apex organisation**

Nyameng Kunda Apex seems to be a relatively weak and dependent organisation that is struggling to survive. Its main objective seems to be to seek external assistance for any problems it faces. This may be caused by the fact that the organisation only came into existence in order to benefit from the material assistance AATG could bring and was organised solely around sesame milling. Fofana *et al* (1998) argue that: '...development undertakings organised around a single activity fail when the activity becomes unsuccessful'. While its own sesame mill is now defunct, the Apex is now a member of a nearby Sesame Growers' Association in Librass that will obtain a mill from CRS.

The Apex organisation is fundamentally a one-commodity organisation (sesame production and marketing), and seems not to be able to tackle the other varied constraints faced by farmers. This is perhaps changing with the organisation's recent involvement in providing modest support for revenue-raising petty trade activities. The Apex is, therefore, diversifying its activities (e.g. small-scale credit) and, completed with its linkage to the SGA in Librass, this may be enough to ensure the survival of the Apex.

Currently, the Apex also experiences significant difficulties in mobilising its members. This may be due to financial and logistical constraints, but also to a lack of effective organisation and management capacities. Disenchantment with the leadership of the Apex was strongly expressed to the AATG researchers as follows:

*"People do something in order to get something in return; but if I invest in something and I cannot get anything from it, then it will be difficult for me to do a similar thing again"* (Fofana *et al.*, 1998:9).

Because of its trans-community nature, the Apex organisation should provide an opportunity for farmers to have an effective linkage with research and extension services,

and to act as a vehicle for the expression of their needs. However, for the moment, the Nyameng Kunda Apex does not play this role.

As a result of these problems AATG decided that the whole organisation needed to be reactivated if it was to continue to exist and serve its members. In particular, there appears to be a need to strengthen its capacity to analyse and overcome problems itself (building self-confidence/ encouraging self-help). AATG is now generally refocusing its efforts on building up the capacity of the CBO's with which it works. The new AATG project on CBO Capacity Building in The Gambia (recently funded by UK Department for International Development (DFID)) also has as its intention to increase the capacities of VDG's to generate their own requests for external interventions and become increasingly self-reliant. It is also aiming to establish the legal recognition of VDG's by the Government.

If successful, these initiatives could lead to the Apex being able to move beyond dependence on the financial assistance of AATG and towards a more positive approach, which could include approaching national research and extension services for solutions to specific agricultural problems. If unsuccessful, organisations such as the Apex would seem to be unsustainable without continued material assistance from AATG.

## **5. Sesame Growers' Associations and Catholic Relief Services: organising farmers and the birth of a dynamic farmers movement?**

### **5.1. Emergence of Sesame Growers' Associations**

The international NGO Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has been central to the development of sesame seed and oil production in The Gambia since the early 1980's. Its support has been provided through commodity-based farmers' associations, which are currently in the process of taking on a national character. Due to this dynamic, the involvement of agricultural research at key moments and the overt efforts of CRS to learn from the experience of AATG in related activities this case merits discussion here.

In the early 1980's CRS distributed cooking oil provided by the US to women in order to reduce the incidence of malnutrition in The Gambia. However, with a view to finding a long term solution to cooking oil availability, CRS initiated the cultivation of sesame as an oil-seed crop in 1983 as part of its health and nutrition programme, beginning with the cultivation of 30 hectares of dark variety sesame. The processing of sesame into oil (with its high oil and protein content) was intended to replace the cooking oil that was part of the CRS food aid package to rural Gambians.

Sesame was a new crop for farmers in The Gambia. While its introduction in The Gambia was initiated by CRS, efforts were made to verify its suitability in relation to other oil-seed crops. Comparative trials were carried out with sunflower and sesame. The selection process followed a classic approach: the importation of a number of seed varieties from India, Burkina Faso and Mexico and agronomic trials carried out by the Department of Agricultural Research near Banjul in 1985 (the precursor to NARI - then part of the Department of State for Agriculture). Selected farmers were involved in the trial process and in a series of palatability and other tests. Among other disadvantages, sunflower experienced problems with pest damage. The result of this process was the selection of a variety of sesame for broader dissemination in The Gambia.

CRS collaborated with other organisations to «sell» the idea of producing sesame to women farmers - women being the focus of CRS nutrition programmes. Sesame seeds were originally provided free to farmers. CRS possessed oil milling equipment in a number of its nutrition centres and it encouraged women farmers to bring the harvest to these centres to process the sesame oil for a fee. Evidently, the provision of facilities for oil extraction stimulated the rapid increase in sesame production (Bojang 1995). The introduction of the innovation was clearly initiated and managed by the external organisation in a classically top-down manner at this stage. However, the initial success of the approach in ensuring adoption of sesame seed production was clear: according to CRS, in 1986 12 000 hectares were being cultivated with sesame, producing some 4 000 tonnes of sesame<sup>6</sup>. The interest in sesame and its rapid rate of adoption seemed also to be due to the fact that sesame is drought tolerant, a key concern of farmers suffering from the generalised conditions of drought in the Sahel in the 1980's.

However, it became clear in the period between 1986 and 1989 that the sesame processing capacity available in The Gambia could not support the increased production. Further, in 1989 production dropped to 800 tonnes. The waning interest of farmers in sesame production can be attributed to their lack of awareness of the different possible uses of sesame and limits on downstream processing and marketing capacity. As a result, CRS sought ways to increase the ownership of the process by farmers and thereby, it was hoped, increase the sustainability of sesame production. This led in 1989 to the formation of the first Sesame Growers' Associations, SGA's, (table III). However, between 1990-1992 CRS ceased to provide promotional support for sesame production, which only continued on a small-scale in areas close to the few oil mills still in operation.

The SGA's gained renewed interest in sesame production in 1993 and CRS responded with the importation of improved white variety seed from Mexico and the initiation of a pilot sesame export programme in 1994, launched by CRS with USAID funding. Four SGA's were involved in this activity, with CRS providing them with extension agents, transportation,

---

<sup>6</sup> The figures quoted are those provided by CRS.

seeds and technical support. CRS also established links with the major private sesame exporter in The Gambia (Landry Holdings) to ensure the marketing of produce. This seemed to provoke increased interest in sesame production with more SGA's being established and getting involved in sesame production (four SGA's received CRS support in 1994; this increased to seven in 1995-1996, to thirteen in 1997 and as of 1998 this total has increased to fourteen). In 1996, about 2 397 litres of sesame oil were processed at SGA milling centres and in 1997 sesame exports were estimated at some 700 t from a total estimated production of 1 283 t - the remainder being consumed or sold locally. 1998 production is expected to increase to 2 000 t and the number of private exporters used has increased.

With this dynamic in place CRS was continuing to support the organisation of women sesame farmers with the conviction that more farmers could be involved through organisations, and that information on sesame production and marketing could be more easily passed on to greater numbers of farmers through SGA's. In terms of institutional support, CRS provides training in functional literacy and bookkeeping to SGA executive committee members. It also covers the wage of a monitor employed by each SGA and pays half the wage of an animator (the other 50% paid by the employing SGA). Animators receive training from Divisional extension staff of the Department of State for Agriculture. In an extension of its material assistance, in 1997-1998 CRS decided to buy and provide 27 milling machines to SGA's at no cost (18 of these are now operational).

**Table III.** «Paving the path to towards the economic empowerment of women farmers»: Sesame Growers' Associations (SGAs).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership and organization of SGAs</li> </ul> <p>Each SGA is an independent, legally registered activity. The Sesame Growers' Associations (SGAs) were formed in 1989. Currently, only women are members of SGAs While male sesame growers are encouraged - men now produce some 50% of sesame in The Gambia - they are not as yet permitted to be members of the SGA executive board due to the fear that they will eventually take control of SGAs. SGAs are organised in a pyramidal fashion.</p> <p>At the base are approximately 48 000 women farmers, who belong to about 800 <i>kafos</i>. Each <i>kafo</i> has a leader. Village <i>kafos</i> must apply to join an SGA.</p> <p>At the next level, groups of between 5 and 15 <i>kafos</i> are grouped into clusters, which hold their own bank accounts. Each cluster has a committee of representatives elected from each of the <i>kafos</i>.</p> <p>The clusters are then grouped into SGAs and are administered by an Executive Committee selected by the general membership. The President of an SGA is elected by a general assembly of cluster members.</p> <p>SGAs must have a constitution and be registered as legal entities with the Attorney General's Chambers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities of SGA's</li> </ul> <p>Primarily, activities surrounding the production, marketing and processing of sesame either for household consumption or for sale.</p> <p>A diverse range of additional income-generating and human development activities.</p>
---

Source : CRS 1997.

The CRS project has explicitly tried to learn from the operational problems encountered by the Nyameng Kunda Apex organisation supported by AATG. It has tried to explore with farmers, SGA's and other stakeholders in the sesame sector (private exporters, DOSA etc.) the reasons for and possible solutions to the problems experienced in marketing sesame in the early 1990's. Hence in 1998 a Consultative Forum was organised to bring together all stakeholders. This Forum recommended improving the processing of sesame and the maintenance of milling equipment. Mills will henceforth be managed by a committee of women drawn from the SGA. This committee will control the use of the mills and, it is hoped, create an interest in maintaining them. Further, this committee will have to maintain an account into which 20% of revenues are placed solely to cover operating and maintenance expenses of the milling machine.

However, the SGA's cannot yet be said to be sustainable organisations. They face many challenges and risks. For example, private sesame buyers are beginning to approach individual sesame farmers directly to buy their produce. Such side-stepping of the SGA's reduces their potential bargaining power in the market. Further, if profitable, increasing numbers of individual farmers may decide to sell their sesame directly rather than be bound to an organisation. In order to prevent this from fundamentally undermining the SGA's, these organisations will have to demonstrate that they are capable of representing the broader interests of their members at local and national level, with private sector buyers and policy makers.

## **5.2. The emergence of the National Association of Women Farmers (NAWFA)**

As is the case with AATG's interventions, the target group is primarily women farmers due to the specific approach and mandate of the NGO involved. The success of women-centred approaches in The Gambia is founded on the achievements of the World Bank supported Women in Development project that lasted for 5 years to 1998. In particular, the information, education and communication components of this project have contributed to substantially increasing women's capacity to participate in development interventions in The Gambia. In contrast to the traditional role women played in public life, it has now become generally acceptable for women to speak in public meetings and hold positions of responsibility in organisations. Women are also more sensitised to key development issues than in the past. This has created the opportunity for the creation of a strong national movement of women farmers - emerging in this case from the SGA's.

In this context, CRS is assisting women farmers to organise themselves into what is hoped will become a powerful economic actor in the sesame sector: the National Association of Women Farmers (NAWFA). NAWFA was created in 1997 and is still in the early stages of formation, with its internal structure still being negotiated. At this stage, it is impossible to assess its impact and functioning, however CRS views the creation of a national

organisation as necessary. This will act as a mouthpiece for all women farmers, not only SGA's. However, the establishment of NAWFA will be facilitated by the existence of a core of highly organised SGA's. SGA's are now being required by CRS to contribute 40% of their sesame milling revenues to an account dedicated to NAWFA.

It remains to be seen whether NAWFA will develop into an organisation with its own dynamic, power and capacity to represent women farmers' interests before government, donors and the private sector. However, the foundations seem to be laid for a sustainable organisation.

### **5.3. Linkages between CRS, SGA's and Research and Extension**

The involvement of agricultural research in the process has been relatively small and indirect. CRS relations with agricultural research were initially characterised as «informal» and based on personal relationship (Bojang, n d.). Direct linkages between the SGA's and NARI have until now been very limited and lacking in structure (e.g. no contractual relations). First, agricultural researchers of the then Department of State for Agriculture were involved in conducting trials of sesame and sunflower varieties in the mid 1980's, apparently at the request of CRS in order to establish an appropriate replacement for the less drought-resistant groundnut. Second, NARI has recently been called upon to conduct trials of sesame varieties as part of a broader collaboration agreement between CRS, and extension. Private sector buyers of sesame are also involved in this process. More recently, however, CRS has obtained a seat on NARI's Research and Finance Committee thus enabling this NGO to act as intermediary between SGA's and NARI. CRS has since volunteered to fund NARI research activities on sesame and NARI has demonstrated its willingness to respond to the requests of civil society organisations. Further, officials of NARI have stated that it would respond positively to requests coming directly from SGA's or other farmers' organisations *if* they could mobilise the resources to buy research services.

As regards sesame production, NARI also provides support to the main private sesame exporter: Landry Holdings. NARI is paid by this private company to ensure the quality control of seed production, advise on the cropping cycle and on crop growth over the season. It is therefore fully involved in a support role in sesame production.

The relationship between government extension services and the CRS initiative is stronger. As a result of a recent memorandum of understanding signed between the Department for Agricultural Services and CRS, there is close collaboration between CRS and Divisional extension agents. For example, in June 1998 CRS trained extension workers in sesame production so they could support SGA's and CRS/SGA animators and monitors are trained by staff of the Department for Agricultural Services.

## 5.4. Lessons

In this case, the international NGO has clearly been playing the key role in initiating and building farmers' organisations around a single commodity (sesame). It has acted as catalyst and intermediary. While the experience has at times suffered setbacks, support from CRS in providing finance, equipment, training, capacity building, and extension has been critical to the adoption of sesame and its continued production. Although the approach to technology generation and dissemination has not been very participatory (indeed, in some ways the process has been classically top-down, managed by CRS), it has resulted in a wide adoption of sesame by women and men farmers. Given that sesame was introduced from abroad to solve a specific food security problem a top-down approach may have been the only feasible one. Further, the process promises to become more participatory. A consultative forum in 1998 involved all actors in discussing solutions to problems in sesame production and marketing. In addition, this intervention appears to be leading to the creation of a representative and structured farmers' movement, which has the potential to be the independent mouthpiece for women sesame farmers in The Gambia. The proposed structure of NAWFA should allow requests for research and extension services to be effectively formulated and carried forward from *kafo* level to SGA, to the national board of NAWFA. However, it remains to be seen whether sesame production, and the SGA's, will flourish without the continued material and technical support of CRS.

CRS has managed to integrate the traditional form of local social organisation (*kafo*) into the new SGA and NAWFA structures. However, in recognition of a certain tendency for men to take control of economic organisations and the weaknesses of *kafo*'s in undertaking production-oriented activities, the new organisations stand independently.

CRS have also tried to learn from the problems encountered by the AATG-supported Nyameng Kunda Apex organisation. Specifically, they have not created SGA's, but have waited for them to emerge, and approach CRS for assistance. Further, they have tried to build a greater sense of ownership of the organisation, of equipment and income among members. Finally, they have provided new milling equipment, have required SGA's to establish an operating and maintenance account with a view to avoiding mechanical breakdowns, and they have also tried to build up transparent financial and general management capacities within the SGA's. In addition, CRS and AATG are trying not to duplicate interventions or act as competitors. Hence, the Nyameng Kunda Apex organisation is now a member of a new SGA being formed in Central River Division South, which will give them access to a functioning sesame mill.

CRS collaboration with extension services is (and has been) strong, and agricultural research has played a significant, if indirect, role in the development of sesame production. NARI

has close relations with CRS, but no direct linkages with *farmers' organisations*. With the emergence of the SGA's and NAWFA there is now an opportunity for closer collaboration between NARI and these farmers' organisations. As these organisations become stronger their capacity to formulate requests for research on specific themes of interest to them should grow. In order to facilitate such a development, however, it may be necessary for NARI to demonstrate the advantages of collaboration to SGA's and NAWFA and attempt to set up mechanisms or fora for collaboration.

## **6. Overall assessment of linkages between agricultural research, extension and farmers in The Gambia: observations and ways forward**

### **6.1. Summary observations**

There are a number of elements that favour the establishment of strong relations between research and farmers' organisations in The Gambia.

- A legislative programme on local government decentralisation and legal recognition of Village Development Committees in the process of being implemented

The existence of strong traditional and government-inspired village-level farmers' organisations

- National farmers' organisations formed and growing in strength and representativity (Platform and NAWFA)
- Dynamic Sesame Growers' Associations emerging as an economic force
- Donor/NGO and Government bodies working to build capacities and strengthen the internal organisation of FO's (including financial, material and training support).
- International NGO's (AATG; CRS) acting as intermediaries between research and farmers' organisations allowing the latter to obtain technologies from research.
- A focus on encouraging women's empowerment, development and organisation (CRS/SGA's, AATG, LADEP and Women in Development project).
- LADEP research contracts – models for future contracts between research, funders and FO's.
- A national research institution open to working with farmers in new participatory ways. Growing use of participatory research methodologies (PRA...).
- Strong potential for research to begin working with FO's once the latter are aware that research has something to offer their members, assuming FO capacities grow with the various capacity-building measures and that NARI/extension find ways to financially support strong research-extension linkages.

However:

- until recently, autonomous and effective producer organisations have been rare or non-existent;
- VDC's and *kafo*'s lack capacity to organise around production activities without external financial assistance ;
- existing national farmers' movements are young and overly dependent on financial support from international NGO's;
- men (and male FO's) tend to be sidelined in the internationally supported initiatives studied here (except the National Farmers' Platform);
- very weak relations between research, extension and FO's;
- agricultural research continues to use a basically top-down, researcher-led approach; NARI is relatively young and has virtually no experience of collaborating with farmers' organisations;
- new farmers' movements do not see linkage with research as priority;
- a period of international financing of research and extension linkages ending leaving these national institutions uncertain as to how they will fund improved research-extension-farmers' organisation linkages;
- a loose relationship exists between research, NGO's and emerging FO's (no formal contracts, rather *ad hoc* consultation and requests for research).

## 6.2. Observations

### 6.2.1. Evolution of farmers' organisations in The Gambia

Strong traditional social structures do exist at the farmers' level in The Gambia. These organisations (the *kafo*) tend to have defined social or economic activities and do not represent all households in villages. Further, they tend to be reticent about undertaking group production activities. They are therefore seen as effective channels for research and extension to pass information to farmers, but they do not appear to be appropriate organisations through which production activities and techniques should be undertaken. This remains true for the VDC's which have been incited by the State to act as co-ordinating organisations for all village level development interventions. VDC's do appear to be more representative organisations and can be effective channels for passing on information. However, they do not seem to be keen on organising production activities together. State research and extension services have therefore tended to focus production-oriented activities at the village level on individual farmers - while not ignoring the importance of VDC's as entry points for establishing activities at the village level.

GOTG has accepted the potential importance of channelling development-oriented interventions through farmers' organisations. With its Vision 2020 strategy (ROG 1996), GOTG asserts that Government services like extension and agricultural research should henceforth be seen as one service for all citizens owned by all - not part of an alien state machinery, which has been the perception in the past. The Vision 2020 strategy also accepts the importance of increasing popular participation in the upkeep of natural resources. As part of this new emphasis, producer associations are seen to have a significant role co-ordinating strategies to improve the welfare of their members: the focus would be building capacities at the group level through training, adaptation of technologies along with encouraging the management of farms as business entities (ROG 1996). This acceptance of the important role of farmers' organisations has been concretised in the on-going decentralisation and local government reform processes. Through these initiatives VDC's will have the opportunity to be legally recognised entities alongside commodity-based organisations (such as SGA's) and NGO's. Local participation in development policy-making and allocation of resources will be emphasised, in contrast to the centralised processes that previously existed (see Department of State for Local Government and Lands 1997:3).

It is important not to treat farmers' organisations as the mere instruments for achieving the objectives of national research and extension bodies. It must be recognised that the primary role of these organisations is to serve their members' interests, and these may not always have technological innovation as a priority. Nonetheless, it must be noted that the changes noted above lead to new possibilities for collaboration between research, extension and farmers' organisations/NGO's *if* the latter request solutions to technical agricultural problems.

The important role that will be played by an organised, national farmers' movement such as the CILSS-supported Farmers' Platform should not be overlooked. If it can raise funds to enable it to function properly this organisation could become a real voice for farmers throughout the country capable of liaising with national research and extension institutions as well as foreign donor organisations. While still in its infancy, the Platform has been involved in nation-wide consultations on agricultural policy (see DeCosse 1998a and 1998b). It has also made requests to GOTG for agricultural inputs to be made available in the remote areas of the country. The government has not responded to these requests, however.

When coupled with a number of capacity-building projects aimed at strengthening civil society organisations (e.g. AATG's new DFID-funded CBO capacity-building project, CRS's continuing support for SGA's and NAWFA, and the commitment to capacity-building of CBO's enshrined in the plan of action for local government reform), a new context is emerging in The Gambia whereby farmers' organisations of different types will increasingly be empowered to take effective charge of diverse development activities affecting their members. NARI can be proactive in attempting to make these organisations aware of the

services it has to offer. It will then be for FO's, supported perhaps by international NGO's, to establish working partnerships with NARI.

### *6.1.2. The three case studies*

The three initiatives relating to farmers' organisations that have been analysed in this report do not reveal strong direct relations between farmers' organisations and agricultural research in The Gambia. The NARI case is a classic example of research collaborating with contact farmers in the T&V mode. The work of AATG with VDC's and CRS with new commodity-based farmers' organisations (SGA's) reveal that farmers' organisations do exist or are in the process of being created in The Gambia. Some of these organisations have the potential to represent farmer interests and to work directly with research and extension in the future (e.g. SGA's, NAWFA, and the Farmers Platform). This should be encouraged by current initiatives of GOTG to support decentralisation, coupled with NGO support for CBO capacity-building and attempts to create bodies that can represent farmers' organisations at the national level (e.g. NAWFA; the Farmers Platform).

However, the case studies presented here show that linkages between agricultural research and farmers' organisations are tenuous. Agricultural research does not yet work with farmers' organisations directly - it works with contact farmers. The Nyameng Kunda Apex Organisation and SGA's have had no direct linkages with research and have not reached the stage of formulating requests for research. The national-level farmers' organisations (NAWFA and Farmers Platform) are still in the process of being formed and their potential for doing more than requesting external finances to support development initiatives is as yet untested. Finally, NARI itself remains to be persuaded as to the pertinence and efficiency of involving farmers or FO representatives in more stages of the technology generation and development process.

The cases of the Apex and the SGA's have been examined in order to assess the potential for these farmers' organisations to develop relations with research and extension in the future. However, among the three cases studied here, NARI's work in the village of Ndembanjola represents the only example of agricultural research working directly with farmers in response to priorities expressed by farmers. The final conclusions of this report will focus on the lessons learnt from this experience, an analysis of obstacles to research and extension collaborating with FO's in The Gambia drawing on the lessons learnt from the study of the AATG and CRS experiences. Finally, some suggestions for improving research-extension-farmers' organisation linkages in the future will be made.

### *6.1.3. Relations between agricultural research, extension and farmers' organisations*

#### **Assessment of relations between research and farmers' organisations**

NARI is the main agricultural research institute in The Gambia. ITC - the International Trypanotolerance Centre - is based in Banjul and carries out research at a regional level on

issues related to the livestock sector and, specifically, trypanosomosis. Some of ITC's research is carried out in The Gambia and hence contributes to the national agricultural research system. The approach of both institutions to research on agricultural innovations remains based on the contact farmer model: the definition of research themes is undertaken by researchers and development projects (albeit with the benefit of information on farmer priorities drawn from participatory surveys); on-farm trials and a few contact farmers are used to adapt technologies and pass information on innovations to farmers; technology is then transferred to farmers via extension agents (whether those of the State, those of NGO's such as CRS or ActionAid, or those of projects such as LADEP).

Neither NARI nor ITC have much experience of working in direct partnership with farmers' organisations in The Gambia. Strong and autonomous farmers' organisations did not emerge until recently and their capacities to interact with research remain weak. While NARI has responded to requests from NGO's for research on behalf of farmers' organisations, NARI has no direct relations with farmers' organisations. Those FO's that do exist tend to be driven by NGO's and projects, with which NARI has linkages

As a case in point, NARI's work on animal traction for lowland rice farming (presented in section 3 above) is basically an example of adaptive research initiated by NARI on the request of LADEP extension services, albeit based on a participatory needs assessment and a contract between LADEP and the community in question. Only individual «contact» farmers are approached to participate in the process according to the requirements of research. NARI researchers identify villages and contact farmers owning fields suitable for their planned trials. LADEP acts here as an intermediary between research and farmers - a role that results from LADEP's access to international resources for research and extension.

However, research institutes in The Gambia have demonstrated a willingness to develop closer relations with local communities and involve them in more stages of the research process. For example, in recognition of the need to work closely with rural communities, both NARI and ITC are beginning to adopt participatory research methods (such as participatory rural appraisal and participatory diagnostic surveys), particularly at the stage of establishing local level needs and priorities. NARI is now establishing PRA studies of farmers' constraints as an annual feature in its attempts to re-orient research activities towards solving farmers' problems. While this may not be sufficient in itself, it does indicate a willingness to re-orient research work to farmers' expressed needs. In addition, the President of the National Farmers Platform sits on its governing board which will, when the Platform is fully established, allow a farmers' organisation to influence agricultural research policies on behalf of their members.

In summary, NARI seems to be observing the situation and is waiting to see whether emerging FO's could be effective partners. It is not yet convinced that it is efficient to involve FO's at all levels of the technology generation and dissemination process (e.g.

definition of research themes). It believes that existing FO's need to have their capacities strengthened in order for them to be able to interact effectively with research (build literacy and capacities to propose their own solutions to the problems they face. On the other hand, NARI appears to be very open to suggestions for new ways of collaborating with local communities and making research more demand-driven if the capacities of these were strengthened. This would improve the relevance and long term impact of its research. It would only be able to move in this direction if resources were available to fund such linkages, however. The potential for improving linkages in the future seems very high.

### **Evolution of research - extension linkages in The Gambia**

NARI's linkages with state extension services have been relatively strong. In the 1980's and early 1990's international assistance financed a project on research and extension linkages and until 1993, NARI operated as a «sister» department to extension under the DOSA. Currently, there are a number fora where research and extension meet and collaborate. For example, until recently NARI and DOSA extension staff have Monthly Technology Review Meetings at the zonal level (northern and southern zone). Here, researchers and extension workers discuss innovations, how best to disseminate them to farmers and training issues. Such meetings have recently become less regular due to the phasing out of the ASP, which used to finance them. Further, there appear to be problems of feedback between research and extension at the Divisional level. Finally, there is concern that the research-extension linkages that have been built up with international financial support will deteriorate significantly in coming years due to the phasing out of ASP.

Currently, and despite its limited scale, the LADEP project presents fairly positive example of research-extension-farmer linkages, however. The project is using its project funds to foster these linkages by establishing contracts between the project and research, and between itself and local communities. Through its involvement of NARI in responding to farmer priorities it is facilitating a process of greater collaboration between research, extension and farmers in the lowlands. However, it has not yet tried to encourage direct linkages between research and farmers' organisations.

Ways will have to be found to maintain and strengthen research and extension linkages after international financial assistance is phased out in 1998/89, perhaps using the positive example of the LADEP project.

#### *6.1.4. Role of NGO's*

As noted, international NGO's (particularly AATG and CRS) have played a significant role in the emergence of farmers' organisations in The Gambia. This role has both positive and negative aspects. On the negative side, these NGO's have promoted farmers' organisations to serve their own agenda or mandate for agricultural development (e.g. sesame production,

processing and marketing). Further, they have acted as farmers' representatives at the national and local level. While this role has been important, the problem remains as to whether they can legitimately represent the demands or requests of farmers. Finally, as the example of Nyameng Kunda Apex has shown, there is a problem of FO dependence on NGO resources and support which could affect the likelihood of sustainability of the organisations when such support ends.

On the positive side, in the absence of a strong farmers' movement in The Gambia these NGO's have played a vital intermediary role between research and extension, and farmers. The two NGO's examined here have very close relations with NARI: CRS is represented on its finance committee and NARI provides specific research to CRS on the sesame sector; AATG has a representative sitting on the monitoring and evaluation committee of NARI. They have also contributed significantly to the emergence of farmers' organisations, their training and capacity-building, both at the national and local level. The success of sesame production and export, and of the FO's emerging from this sector, has demonstrated this. Finally, the NGO's are trying to address the problem of dependency: for example, AATG is launching a capacity-building programme for CBO's and CRS is trying to ensure that SGA's have both the capacities and resources to function independently.

#### *6.1.5. Obstacles to developing stronger research - extension -farmers organisation linkages in The Gambia*

Stronger linkages between agricultural research, extension and farmers' organisations are hampered by a number of factors, including the following:

- NARI is a recent creation: NARI was created only in 1993. It is a young institution still in the process of finding an appropriate structure and approach to working with farmers. While it is interested in developing closer ties with farmers and increasing their participation in setting research priorities, it is still in the process of assessing the most appropriate ways of doing this. It is not convinced of the practicality or efficiency of farmers or FO's being involved in all stages of technology development.
- A recent phase of international financing for agricultural research and extension in The Gambia is ending in 1998: With ASP ending 1999, there is great uncertainty concerning how to cover the operating expenses of VEW's (e.g. fuel) and the costs of the regular meetings between research and extension.
- Current lack of capacity of kafo's and VDC's: Traditional *kafo's* are strong and independent, but do not collaborate with research and extension. They are widely seen to be an inappropriate level of organisation for the delivery of services to farmers or the organisation of production activities. The VDC's have been created by the Government to function in this way. However, these are young and often fragile organisations, although bolstered by official recognition. Their weakness lies in the way in which they have been

established through an initiative of GOTG rather than as a result of the wishes of members. Their capacity to develop into viable organisations with their own dynamic may be threatened by these origins, as the example of the Nyameng Kunda Apex organisation (based on village VDC membership) has shown. While, some VDC's seem to be strong and have their own internal dynamic, this may depend on the interests and capacities of individual leaders (e.g. Ndembanjola). This lack of capacity is recognised by NARI, the National Farmers' Platform, CRS, AATG and other actors. It partly explains why research remains sceptical about collaborating with FO's and why the research and extension systems have remained fairly top-down despite similar critiques in the 1980's.

- Farmers do not automatically see the benefits of forming groups or joining FO's: Farmers will have to see the material benefits of joining FO's. The SGA's and NAWFA seem to have this concrete incentive to organise themselves as they are organised around a profitable commodity. The Platform may have more problems in demonstrating to members that it can serve their material interests. It has no single commodity or sector as its focus and has, as yet, no way of raising cash from members to support its activities.
- Youth and dependence of organisations established with the support of NGO's: The problems experienced by the Nyameng Kunda Apex Organisation and its dependency on AATG for resources and advice reveal the difficulties in creating viable and sustainable organisations which possess their own dynamic in The Gambia. The SGA's seem to have a stronger dynamic, albeit similarly based on a single commodity. However, these also depend heavily on the support of CRS and may be unsustainable without the free provision of inputs and services.
- Loose relationship between Research and NGO's: NGO's, such as AATG and CRS have close relations with research, but have not tried to develop contracts for services, an approach that has been successful elsewhere. However, this is not a fundamental problem: these two NGO's have positive informal contacts with NARI, and both are represented on either the NARI Board or committees.
- Over-dependence of FO's on NGO's: The problems faced by the Apex organisation reveal that FO's established at the instigation of NGO's can easily become unsustainable when the NGO ceases to provide them with resources. While the support provided by international NGO's is significant, successful and sustainable FO's must emerge around a farmers' own perceived interests. They also need to have their own ways of raising funds. The CRS is helping SGA's to do this. Further SGA's contribute a portion of profits from their activities to NAWFA. These sector-based organisations may prove to be more sustainable and more capable partners than those based on more general and diverse development concerns (e.g. VDC's; Platform).
- Relative youth and weakness of farmers' organisations at the national level: The National Farmers Platform is only 2 - 3 years old. It is not yet well organised and farmers at

the local level are often unaware of its existence or what it can do for them (see DeCosse 1998). NAWFA is not operational yet. These initiatives are too recent to know their potential impact. Until they develop their own dynamic, raise their own resources, show themselves to be representative, and gain an ability to mobilise farmers at the local level, research and extension will be hesitant to work with them. There are also early indications that tensions or competition exist between the two national level movements, which could undermine confidence in them being legitimate representatives of farmers. The Platform sees itself as the legitimate representative of *all* farmers in The Gambia. On paper, NAWFA is a member of the Platform. However, NAWFA representatives do not attend Platform meetings and have come to see themselves as a separate movement.

- Need to learn from past experiences in working with FO's: As CRS has tried to learn from the failures of the Nyameng Kunda Apex in its support for the development of SGA's, NGO's and research should try and learn from past experiences at FO capacity-building.
- Poor appreciation by farmers' organisations of contribution of research: Farmers' organisations that do exist have not yet seen the advantages that research can provide. While they do see the advantages of organising to draw down external resources, with the exception of the LADEP project, they do not seem to see the value in approaching research to provide answers to their agricultural.

## **6.2. Ways forward for strengthening Research-Extension-Farmer linkages for improved technology generation and dissemination**

- Making participatory research a reality: As elsewhere, the discourse of participation is currently very present in the discourse of NARI and national extension services. There is a clear desire on the part of NARI to encourage more farmer participation in agricultural research. However, relations between research and extension and farmers remain broadly top-down in reality. This could change if NARI concentrated more on analysing its own approaches to research: spreading the use of participatory research methods; working directly with farmers' organisations and their representatives. It needs to allocate researchers' time and resources to investigating the most appropriate routes to increasing farmer participation in setting research priorities, carrying out research activities, analysing and disseminating results.
- Build capacity of farmer's organisations and national farmers' movements: NARI does not feel it can collaborate with FO's until they demonstrate they have the capacity to work effectively as partners on research themes. Support from GOTG and international institutions for capacity-building of CBO's and FO's (e.g. in literacy, and planning solutions to their problems) needs to continue in order to create strong and sustainable farmers' organisations that will be able to effectively collaborate with research and extension directly. The initiatives of the CILSS in supporting the National Farmer's Platform, of AATG

on building the capacity of CBO's and of CRS in building the SGA's and NAWFA need continuing support over time. The CILSS initiative is supported by the Club du Sahel, which recognises that building the Platform is a long term undertaking, and that it will take time for it to develop its own dynamic and build its legitimacy. The Club aims to act as catalyst to building farmers' movements, focusing on encouraging different actors to meet each other, share information etc. This long term approach is a positive sign for the emergence of independent and autonomous farmers' organisations and should avoid the flaw of re-creating instrumental farmers' organisations. However, capacity-building efforts remain critical if strong FO's are to emerge.

- NARI should be more proactive in establishing partnerships with emerging national farmer's movements: The VDC's do serve as the basic organisations with which research and extension should collaborate at the local level. However, other commodity-based organisations (such as the SGA's), and new national organisations (NAWFA and National Farmers' Platform) may also be appropriate partners for research. While the fundamental point will remain the strengthening of the capacity of farmers' organisations so that they are able to freely express their requests to research, NARI could also play a positive role by taking the initiative. NARI should try to establish contacts with these organisations in a proactive way, demonstrating to them in concrete terms through meetings and presentations what research has to offer to farmers. While, of course, it is for farmers' organisations to decide whether they have an interest in establishing relations with research, NARI should not simply wait to be approached by them as they may simply not be aware what research has to offer them. Partnerships developed in such a way may also serve to strengthen the emerging farmers movements in The Gambia thus complementing the capacity-building initiatives of GOTG and NGO's. The comparative youth of NARI and its willingness to develop new approaches to participatory research provide an opportunity for this to lead to interesting, innovative partnerships between research and farmers' organisations for improved technology generation and dissemination.
- Learning from LADEP: Learning from the LADEP experience, NARI could try to develop its own contracts with VDC's for research services. This would answer NARI's own concerns about the effectiveness of the contact farmer approach and contribute to widening the reach and impact of its activities. If VDC's can obtain decision-making powers over resources allocated to local development as a result of the local government reform process this could assist them in formulating concrete requests for research inputs from NARI.
- Include men as well as women in FO development and research-FO partnerships: All the case studies analysed here focus on working to resolve the agricultural problems of women farmers. Actors supporting agricultural development in The Gambia are very sensitised to the needs of women, often as a result of the interventions of international organisations (e.g. the World Bank supported WID initiative). This emphasis has had

positive effects (women's empowerment; support to types of production traditionally carried out by women...) and is of undeniable importance. However, the negative effects of such an approach must not be ignored, for example: men are effectively excluded from managing some of the most promising FO's, the emerging SGA's (they are also evidently excluded from NAWFA); and the LADEP/NARI project in the lowlands focuses on adapting animal traction technologies for women rice farmers, when it is not at all clear that they will be able to make use of these technologies if men are not involved in the process. Men need to be associated with such processes if they are to result in the effective diffusion of new technologies. Further, male farmers also need farmers' organisations to represent their interests.

- Avoid conflict and competition between emerging national farmers' movements: It is important that the national level farmers' movements emerging do not undermine their ability to represent their members at the national level activities by competing. Forms of collaboration and co-operation should be sought between NAWFA and the Farmers' Platform as this can only give weight to their requests and improve their ability to represent all farmers interests.
- Financial support for research and extension linkages: Further, strong collaboration between research and extension are required throughout in order to establish the obstacles to the adoption of new technologies and then make appropriate adaptations or new research activities. In this context, it is essential that ways be found to continue and strengthen communications between research and extension after the end of ASP financing - perhaps through State funding or continued donor support.

## **Bibliography**

- AATG, 1997. 1997 Annual Report. ActionAid The Gambia.
- AATG, 1998. Phase-Out Programming Strategy Paper DA3. Mimeo. September.
- AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK AND AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT FUND, 1998. The Gambia. Issues paper for the preparation of the country strategy paper 1999-2001.
- ANONYMOUS. (n d.). Agricultural transformation in the Gambia. An issues paper.
- BOJANG, S., (n d.). Report on Agricultural Institutions. Agriculture and Natural Resources Sector Review. Banjul.
- BOJANG, M., (n d.) Report on the Crop Sector. Agriculture and Natural Resources Sector Review. Banjul.
- CRS, 1997. CRS/The Gambia Program and the Sesame Growers' Associations: Development through self-help. Banjul.
- DECOSSE, P., 1998a. Local Perspectives on Agricultural and Natural Resource Policy: Results of Divisional Consultations with the Farmers' Platform in The Gambia. Banjul. May. Club Du Sahel, Paris.
- DECOSSE, P., 1998b. Strengthening of the National Farmers' Platform: Issues emerging from June 1998 Consultations. Banjul. August. Club Du Sahel, Paris.
- DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND LANDS, 1997. Strategy and Plan of Action for Reform of the Local Government System. Banjul, October.
- DOSA, 1998a. A Project Proposal for Strengthening Land Development Capacity for an Enhanced Contribution of Rice in Food Self-Sufficiency. Department of State for Agriculture. Banjul.
- DOSA, 1998b. Local Perspectives on Agricultural and Natural Resource Policy: Results of Divisional Consultations with the Farmers' Platform. Banjul. February.
- DOSA, 1998c. National agricultural extension work plan, 1998 season
- DOSA/IFAD/World Bank, 1997. The Gambia agricultural support project, mid-term review mission 16-30 September.
- FAO, 1997. The National Agricultural Research System of the Gambia: analysis and strategy for the long term.
- FAO, 1998. The National Agricultural Research System of the Gambia: Proposal of a medium-term plan.
- FOFANA, J., JOBE, S., NYANGADO, L. CAMARA, B., 1998. Case Study Report: Nyameng Kunda Apex Organisation. Policy and Research Department, ActionAid The Gambia. Banjul. June.
- KEBBEH, M., 1997. Assessment of the opportunities and constraints to animal traction use in lowland rice production in The Gambia. Draft. NARI, Serrekunda.

KYAW, M. and WIN, K., 1995. Key Information on Agriculture and Natural Resources in The Gambia. Department of Planning, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Banjul.

LADEP, 1998. 1998 Second Quarterly Report, April-June.

MANR, 1997. Pre-Season Monitoring Survey on Extension Activities in Central River Division (CRD). Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, Department of Planning, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Banjul.

REMINGTON, T., 1988. Review of Animal Traction Research with Relevance to Rice Production in The Gambia. NARI. Mimeo.

ROG, 1996. Non Governmental Organisation Decree 1996, Decree No. 81, Republic of The Gambia.

ROG, 1996. The Gambia Incorporated: Vision 2020. Banjul. May.

ROG, 1998. 1997/98 National Agricultural Sample Survey (NASS): Statistical Yearbook of Gambian Agriculture. National Agricultural Data Centre, Department of Planning, Department of State for Agriculture, Republic of The Gambia, Banjul.

SOWE, A., 1996. Agriculture and Natural Resources Sector Review: Report on Agricultural Marketing, Banjul.

UNDP, 1997. The Gambia National Human Development Report 1997.

WORLD BANK, 1992. Staff Appraisal Report, The Gambia Agricultural Services Project.

## **ANNEXES**

ANNEX 1. List of people met

ANNEX 2. Team programme in The Gambia

ANNEX 3. Contract between LADEP and NARI for adaptive research

ANNEX 4. Agricultural Divisions of The Gambia

## ANNEX 1

### List of people met

<b>BANJUL</b>	Georges-Marc ANDRE	Resident Adviser, Delegation of the European Commission
	Ms. J. BADJAN:	Attorney General's Chambers/Department of State for Justice, Banjul
	R.C. BAH	Department of State for Local Government, Banjul
	Malang CAMARA	Research, Planning and Monitoring Co-ordinator, Department of State for Community Development
	H. CARROL	Attorney General's Chambers/Department of State for Justice, Banjul
	Ousman CHAM	Programme Manager, Action Aid and Chairman of The Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
	Amie DIBBA	CILSS
	Yusupha F.J. DIBBA	Programme Officer (Decentralisation), Strategy for Poverty Alleviation Co-ordinating Office, Department of State for Finance and Economic Affairs
	Fasainy DUMBUYA	Agricultural Services Programme (ASP) Co-ordinator
	S. KOLLEY	Assistant Director, DAS-Cape, Department of State for Agriculture
Raffaele MATTIOLI	International Trypanotolerance Centre	
Professor Dr. Dieter MEHLITZ	International Trypanotolerance Centre	
J. SANYANG	Department of State for Local Government, Banjul	
Lynn TAYLOR	Third Secretary (Aid), British High Commission	
Robey WADDA	Programme Officer, SPACO	
<b>BANSANG</b>	Lammin NYANGADO	Action Aid Programme Co-ordinator, Zone L
<b>NDEMBANJOL</b>	Joko BADJIE	Contact farmer
	Mariama BADJIE	Contact farmer
	Filijay KOLLEY	Contact farmer and head of Ndembanjola Village Development Committee
	Mr. F. MANNEH	NARI Research Assistant supervising on-farm trials
	13 farmers from the village of Ndembanjola	
<b>NYAMENG KUNDA</b>	Alhagie B. JATTA	President, Nyameng Kunda Apex Organisation
	Idrissa KORETA	Action Aid Community Development Worker, Zone L
	13 members of the Nyameng Kunda Apex Organisation (including 9 committee members)	
<b>SERREKUNDA</b>	Samuel BRUCE-OLIVER	Director General, National Agricultural Research Institute
	Mohammed KEBBEH	Principal Research Officer, Socioeconomics Programme, NARI
	Mr SENGO	Head NARI Agricultural Engineering Programme
	Musa SUSO	Field Supervisor, NARI Socioeconomics Programme

## ANNEX 2

### Team programme in The Gambia

Date 1998	Time	Activity
25 October	afternoon	Team planning meeting
26 October	morning	Meeting with Mr. R. MATTIOLI, ITC, Banjul Meeting with Mr. O. CHAM, Programme Manager, Action Aid The Gambia (and Chairman of The Association of Non-Governmental Organisations) Meeting with Mr. F. DUMBUYA, ASP Co-ordinator Meeting with Mr. A.BAH, Training Officer, and Mr. S. KOLLEY, Assistant Director, DAS-Cape, Department of State for Agriculture, Banjul
	afternoon	Meeting with Dr BRUCE OLIVER, Director, NARI, Serrekunda
27 October	morning	Meeting with Ms. L. TAYLOR, Third Secretary (Aid), British High Commission, Banjul
	afternoon	Meeting with Mr. M. KEBBEH, Head NARI Socioeconomics Programme, Mr. M. SUSO, Field Supervisor, NARI Socioeconomics Programme and Mr SENGO, Head NARI Agricultural Engineering Programme, Serrekunda Journey Banjul - Bansang
28 October	morning	Meeting Mr. L. NYANGADO, Programme Co-ordinator, Zone L, Action Aid, Bansang
	morning/ afternoon	Meeting with Mr. I KORETA, Action Aid Community Development Worker, Zone L. Meeting with representatives and Committee Members of the Nyameng Kunda Apex Organisation Journey Bansang-Banjul
29 October	morning/ afternoon	Meeting with Mr. M.SENGO, Mr. M. SUSO and Mr. F. MANNEH, NARI Research Assistant, 3 NARI contact farmers and Village Development Committee of Ndembanjola, Western Division
	afternoon	Feedback meeting with Dr BRUCE OLIVER, Director, NARI Reading and report writing
30 October	morning	Meeting with Mr. J. FOFANA, Catholic Relief Services, Banjul Meeting with Mr. M. CAMARA, Research, Planning and Monitoring Co-ordinator, Department of State for Community Development, Banjul Meeting with Mr. O.CHAM, Action Aid, Banjul Meeting with Mr. H. CARROL and Ms. J. BADJAN, Attorney General's Chambers/Department of State for Justice, Banjul Meeting with Mr. J. SANYANG and R.C. BAH, Department of State for Local Government, Banjul
	afternoon	Analysis of documents and report writing
31 October	morning	Analysis of documents and report writing Team meeting Journey Banjul-Europe/Burkina Faso/Cameroon

**ANNEX 3**

**Contract between LADEP and NARI for adaptive research**

LOWLAND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAMME

\*LADEP\*

AGREEMENT FOR

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ADAPTIVE  
RESEARCH COMPONENTS FOR - 1998

BETWEEN

THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH  
INSTITUTE (NARI)

TEL: (220) 484931

AND

THE LOWLAND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAMME

(ON BEHALF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOR  
AGRICULTURE)

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> Feb,

1998

## ANNEX 3

ANNEX II.

### LOWLANDS AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

#### LADEP

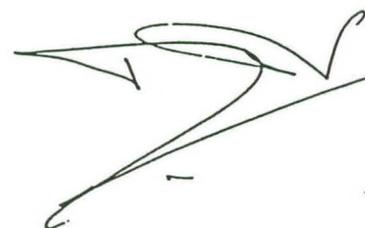
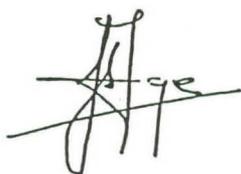
#### PROPOSED SPECIFIC TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE (NARI)

##### 1. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Institute shall be responsible to the Project Coordinator - LADEP and shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

1. Coordinate the implementation of the 7 sub-components of the Contract viz:
  - A. Animal Traction, Research and Development:
  - B. Natural fertility/residual moisture maintenance:
  - C. swamp rice, research and Development:
  - D. Responsive Research and Development:
  - E. Training:
  - F. Village Mills Maintenance Programme.



### ANNEX 3

The Contract is made on the 20th. Feb. ...., 1998 between, The Lowland Agricultural Development Programme (LADEP), herein called 'the Client') and, National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI), on the other hand, (herein 'called the Contractor').

#### WHEREAS

The client has requested the contractor to perform the following tasks required (herein called 'the services'):

- (I) The Contractor undertakes to perform the services (herein called the 'Client's services') in accordance with the attached General Conditions (Annex 1), follow the attached Terms-of-Reference (Annex 2) and the Approved Sub-components's Annual Workplans and Budgets (AWP/B) (Annex 3a - 3e) indicated therein.

Now therefore, the parties agree hereby as follows :

#### (A) THE CONTRACTOR SHALL:

1. execute his/her duties as spelt out in the Specific Terms of Reference (Annex 2).
2. implement the Approved Sub-component Annual Workplans and Budgets (Annex 3a - 3e), in accordance with the accompanying implementation schedules and within the costings stipulated.

#### (B) THE CLIENT SHALL PROVIDE:

1. Equipment in the form of:

Oxen (3 Pairs)

Ox Tools (Lump sum)

Hydrotiller (1)

Motorcycle (1)

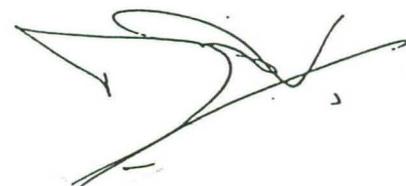
and their operation and maintenance costs;

2. Operational costs

Funds to cover the field operation cost of conducting the research activities stipulated in the Specific Terms of Reference (TOR) attached (Annex II),

3. Adaptive Research and Development:

Funds to cover the costs of research and developments and other activities according to the attached Annual Workplan and Budget (Annex 3a - 3e).



### ANNEX 3

#### 4. Miscellaneous costs

Funds to cover the cost of reporting on his/her current research activities according to the attached General Conditions (Annex II) ;

#### 5A. Training Funds:

Funds to cover the cost of NARI's staff development activities such as visits to IRRI, WARDA, Sierra Leone, Senegal (rice production and animal traction) and Mali (animal traction and alternative crops) and upgrading of the Documentation Center.

#### 5B. Technical Assistance

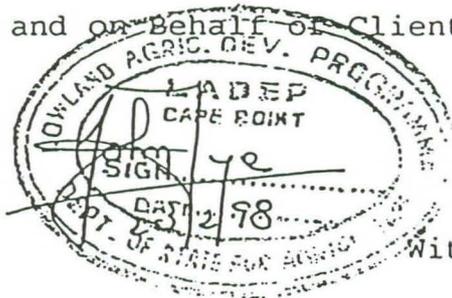
For the Evaluation of the current contract and Supervision of the preparation of the subsequent year's Annual Workplans and budgets. He/She would also conduct in-service training in Research Management for the NARI staff.

#### 6. Village Mills Maintenance:

Support Funds to cover the costs of repair/maintenance of the FAO sponsored Village Mills Programme within LADEP cooperating communities.

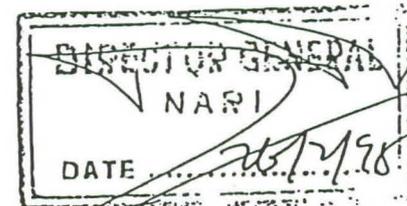
(II) In WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have caused the Contract to be signed in their respective names as of the day and year written above.

For and on Behalf of Client:



Witness:

Contractor:



ANNEX 3

GENERAL CONDITIONS

1. SERVICE:

The Contractor shall follow the Terms of Reference and subsequent further definitions of Terms of Reference given by the Client. The Client is entitled to make amendments to the Terms of Reference without, by doing so, changing the nature of purpose of the Services if, as a consequence hereof the scope of the service is widened or narrowed, the total remuneration shall be adjusted accordingly and the contract period be revised.

2. INFORMATION

Each Party shall promptly inform the other Party of any event or situation which may necessitate an agreement between the Parties on a modification in the scope, character or execution of the Services or in other aspects of the Contract. The Contractor shall furnish the Client with such information (reports) concerning the services as stipulated in the TOR (Annex 2).

3. SUB-CONTRACTS:

The Contractor, may not assign or sub-contract any part of the services to be performed without the written approval of the Client.

4. REPORTING:

The Terms of Reference and/or attached Annual work-plan and Budget will set forth the nature and timing of reports to be prepared in the context of the Services.

5. SUM OF CONTRACT:

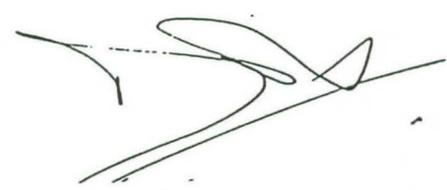
The Contract shall be for the total sum of

6. DISBURSEMENTS:

Disbursement of funds shall be quarterly imprests (basis) made upon submission of requests based on the approved AWP/B and upon the satisfactory retirement of all previous imprests (if any) issued for the purpose of this Contract and the furnishing of due reports. The currency of payment shall be the Gambian Dalasi.

7. RETIREMENTS:

All imprests issued for the purpose of this contract shall be retired within 2 weeks of the expiry of the period for which such imprest was issued.



### ANNEX 3

8. DURATION OF CONTRACT:

This Contract shall be valid to December 31st. 1998. Thereafter, the contract can be renewed annually depending on the satisfactory performance of the Contractor.

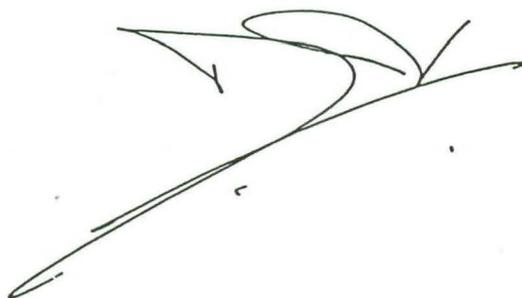
9. OWNERSHIP OF WORK:

Reports and all relevant data compiled or prepared in the course of the Services shall be the property of the Client unless otherwise decided by the Client. Such materials shall be sorted and indexed by the Consultant prior to delivery to the Client. The Consultant may retain a copy thereof, provided, however, that such material shall not be used by the Contractor for purpose unrelated to the Contract without prior written approval of the Client.

10. TERMINATION:

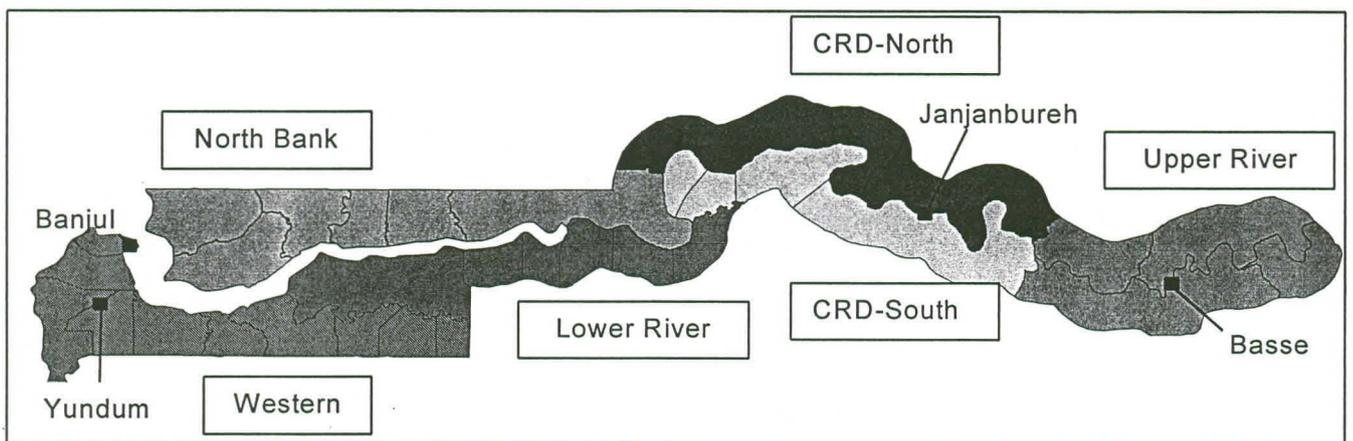
- (A) If, due to events beyond the control of the Contractor the performance of the Services is not feasible, the Contractor may terminate this Contract.
- (B) The Client may suspend or terminate this Contract at any time for unsatisfactory performance by the Contractor.

In both cases, the Contractor shall unless limitation or termination was due to default by the Contractor - be entitled to the agreed reimbursable costs during the period necessary for a prompt and orderly winding-up of the Services.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Aye' with a stylized flourish.A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several sweeping lines.

## ANNEX 4

### Agricultural Divisions of The Gambia



## Strengthening Research – Extension – Farmers’ organisation linkages in West and Central Africa

### Field study – The Gambia

The objective of this study was to analyse interesting case studies of linkages between agricultural research institutions, extension services, farmers’ organisations and other civil society actors in The Gambia. Two case studies were analysed in the Gambia : the activities of an international NGO (ActionAid The Gambia) in the promotion of a farmers’ organisation to improve sesame seed production ; and the recent experience of the National Agricultural Research Institute working with an international project (LADEP) and farmers to develop and disseminate animal traction technology suited to lowland rice farming systems managed primarily by women farmers. Among the most important factors that favoured the adoption of new technologies by farmers in these cases were : the positive role played by international NGOs (finances, capacity-building for farmers’ organisations (FO’s), acting as intermediaries between research and extension on the one hand and farmers on the other) ; an international rural development project that prioritises the participation of farmers at key stages (LADEP); an established process of constructing national level farmers’ organisations to represent farmers ; and a national agricultural research institute that has embraced participatory research methods and is keen to adopt new approaches and find practical ways in which to involve farmers in agricultural research and technology generation. However, significant obstacles to the development of strong linkages were also identified, including : the youth of NARI and its problems in finding appropriate structures and approaches to working with farmers ; the current lack of capacity of FO’s (traditional *kafo*s and more recent Village Development Committees) ; farmers not recognising the advantages of forming groups or FO’s ; the youth and dependence of existing FO’s on international NGO’s ; and a loose relationship between research and international NGO’s. Finally, some recommendations were made to improve partnerships between research, extension and farmers’ organisations.

### ***Renforcer la collaboration entre la recherche, la vulgarisation et les organisations paysannes en Afrique de l’Ouest et du Centre***

#### ***Etude de terrain – Gambie***

*L’objectif principal de cette étude était d’analyser des cas pertinents de partenariats entre institutions de recherche agricole, organismes de vulgarisation, organisations de producteurs et autres organisations de la société civile. Deux actions ont été étudiées en Gambie : 1) l’appui d’une Ong internationale à une organisation de producteurs dans le développement de la production de semences de sésame, 2) une expérience de diffusion d’une technique de traction animale, adaptée aux parcelles rizicoles cultivées principalement par les femmes, conduite par le National Agricultural Research Institute, le projet international de développement, LADEP, et des producteurs. Parmi les facteurs favorisant une dynamique d’adoption d’innovations, il a été noté : 1) l’intervention positive des Ong dans leur soutien aux organisations paysannes (financement, renforcement des capacités internes) et dans leur rôle d’interface entre la recherche -vulgarisation et les organisations paysannes ; 2) l’existence d’un projet international de développement privilégiant la participation des producteurs aux différentes phases du projet (LADEP) ; 3) la structuration d’une organisation de producteurs au niveau national et 4) la présence d’un institut national de recherche agricole ouvert aux méthodes de recherche participatives et favorable à l’adoption et à la recherche de nouvelles pratiques et approches impliquant les producteurs dans les processus de création et de diffusion des innovations. Cependant, de nombreux obstacles à l’établissement de relations fortes entre les partenaires ont été relevés, en particulier : les difficultés du récent institut de recherche (NARI) à définir des structures et des méthodes adaptées à une collaboration avec les producteurs ; la faiblesse actuelle des organisations paysannes (qu’elles soient traditionnelles *Kafo*, ou plus récentes, Village Development Committees) ; le manque de conviction des paysans à former des groupements ; l’inexpérience et la dépendance des organisations existantes vis-à-vis des Ong et l’affaiblissement des relations entre la recherche et les Ong. Des recommandations ont été formulées visant à l’amélioration des relations entre la recherche, la vulgarisation et les organisations paysannes.*