

Proof-of-Concept: Project Report



Implemented by



Scaling up innovation integrating nutrition and women's empowerment into agroecology advisory services in Senegal

Interim report

Authors

Teams Project Implementation Partners



1. Executive summary

1.1 Project title

Scaling up innovation integrating nutrition and women's empowerment into agroecology advisory services in Senegal

1.2 Summary of the proof-of-concept

Short description of the proof-of-concept, including the innovative advisory approach tested, activities implemented, results and major findings.

In Senegal as in many other countries in West Africa, several millions of farmers and pastoralists are vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition due to land degradation, declining soil fertility and the effects of climate change. In addition, gender-based inequity and insufficiently inclusive governance reinforce this situation.

Faced with this situation, many households adopt harmful coping mechanisms: usurious credit, sale of animals, food rationing, etc., which plunge them further into a precarious situation.

For Groundswell International and its partners in Senegal, agro-ecology is the solution to strengthen the adaptive capacity and resilience of households in the face of shocks.

But agro-ecology promoters in Senegal face clashes over how to effectively integrate women's empowerment in agriculture, improved nutritional outcomes and equity (reaching vulnerable households) into agro-ecology projects in their approach.

The promotion of agro-ecology in advisory services, as described above, leading to the identification and dissemination of context-specific innovations, will initiate a transition to an agricultural system that is not only more productive (food security), but also more resilient, helping to regenerate soils and natural resources (life on earth), and paying special attention to women's empowerment (gender), the needs of the most vulnerable households (poverty), and improved nutrition (zero hunger).

That will build governance capacity at the level of local governments and technical services on the one hand, and community leaders, organizations and other actors on the other.

1.3 Global / regional implementation

Project country

The project country is Senegal. And it is being implemented in Kaolack and Kaffrine regions of Senegal, in the communes of Ndiedieng, Keur Socé, Ndiabat, Mbeuleup, Diamagadio and Maabo

1.4 Consortium member(s)

Name of consortium members

Description of core competencies and contribution to the project

Main applicant

Groundswell International Inc. (non-profit organisation, registered charity)

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Regional Coordinator Burkinabè tbourgou@groundswellinternational.org +226 76 67 51 33

Groundswell International is registered since 2009 in the USA. Its team, made of 8 staff, has been active for 11 years on the following area: Agroecology, agroforestry, rural development, food systems, local capacity building, action research. The following paragraphs briefly describe its West Africa staff core competencies, technical or scientific know-how

1. Peter Gubbels, Director for Action Learning and Advocacy

Fields of expertise:

Agriculture, Social Sciences, Rural Development, Adult Education, Resilience; Agroecology.

Food Security; Action Research; Policy Review; Strategic Program Design and Planning;

Evaluation and Impact Assessment; over 30 years of living and working in various West

African countries.

2. Tsuamba Bourgou, Regional Coordinator

Fields of expertise:

Social Sciences, Linguistics Adult Education; Participatory Community Planning;

Strengthening local organisational capacity; Facilitation of multi-stakeholder social learning

3. Moustapha Gningue, tentatively slated to be the project coordinator,

taphagning@gmail.com

Fields of expertise: Agroecology, agricultural value chain development, participatory development, many years experience in Senegal

Consortium member(s) are:

1. International NGO Groundswell International (www.groundswellinternational.org)

Contact persons:

Peter Gubbels, pgubbels@groundswellinternational.org

Bourgou Tsuamba, tbourgou@groundswellinternational.org

Contribution to the proposed innovation partnership, e.g., financial / in-kind contributions

Groundswell will contribute its institutional experience derived from a past regional initiative to scale out a program of agroecology for resilience. This initiative included our network partners in Senegal, Mali and Burkina Faso and was supported by the Global Resilience Partnership; It included strengthening the capacity of local governance for promotion of agroecology. This experience was systematized and documented in a case study and a policy brief. Groundswell's other relevant regional programs address integration of nutrition and women's empowerment into agroecology.

2. NGO Agrecol Afrique (www.agrecolafrique.org)

Contact person: Assane Gueye, agueye.gueye@gmail.com

Contribution to the proposed innovation partnership

Agrecol will contribute to this project through its experience in the promotion of social solidarity economy, agroecology and innovation development. For more than 20 years, this NGO has been working in these areas and has acquired a solid experience in accompanying people living in poverty to organize and mobilize themselves to better produce while respecting the environment, the land and the health of people and animals, through participatory and responsible management.

3. NGO AgriBio Services, www.agribioservices.org

Contact person: Djibril Thiam, thiamdjibril@yahoo.fr

Contribution to the proposed innovation partnership

AgriBio Services is an independent development organization based in the region of Thies (Senegal). Its goal is to promote the recognition and inclusion of local innovation of vulnerable groups as an entry point in the fight against food insecurity. AgriBio Services will contribute to this project through its experience in the development of food systems based on agroecology and local entrepreneurship to realize the right to food.

4. Private enterprise, Sooretul, www.sooretul.com

Contact person: Awa Caba, awa.caba@sooretul.com

Contribution to the proposed innovation partnership

Sooretul is a private company of online distribution of agro-food products and natural organic cosmetics processed in Senegal. Its mission is to contribute to the promotion and marketing of processed agricultural products in Africa. Its vision is to bring together rural supply and urban demand in terms of consumption of organic and natural agri-food and cosmetic products. Sooretul will contribute to the project by developing equitable value chains of agroecological products, mostly with women, in participating communities.

2. Project implementation

2.1 Main activities implemented (until end of April 2022)

(Information on project activities, e.g. workshops, trainings, events, communications, etc.)

Description	Status (on track / delayed / finished)	Contributing to output ...	Comments
Project launch workshop	finished		See Annex 1
Workshops to harmonize stakeholders' understanding and practices in agroecology and tools to integrate women's empowerment, nutrition and local governance	finished	Main actors involved in implementing the project as well as local and regional decision makers have harmonized their visions of agroecology, including the 10 principles developed by FAO	See Annex 2

Selection of intervention villages	finished	Areas and communities ready to get involved in agroecological innovations adaptation and scaling	See Annex 3
Exchange visits	finished	People in the intervention villages are well informed about the benefits of agroecology and women's empowerment in agriculture	See Annex 4
Establishment of village committees	finished	Community level organizations available and ready to strengthen their capacity in agroecological innovation implementation and spreading.	See Annex 5
Selection of agroecology volunteers at village level	finished	Local leaders (men and women) ready to strengthen their capacities in agroecological innovation implementation as well as in training others through a peer training to scale out agroecology	See Annex 7
Drafting of the process progress report	on track	Report available	See Annex 8
Workshop to share process documentation	finished	Participants are aware of the process that has been developed, implemented and of its achievements	See Annex 9
Baseline survey	delayed (postponed)		

(sorted chronologically / thematically)

2.2 Achievement of outputs and indicators (until end of April 2022)

(Information on the target achievement regarding outputs and indicators)

Output	Indicator	Target value	Current value	Status (on track /delayed achieve)	Comments
Output 1	Indicator				
Main actors have harmonized their vision	Numbers or participants	12	12	Achieved	
Output 2					
Municipalities are selected	Number of municipalities selected	6	6	Achieved	
Clusters of villages are defined	Number of village clusters defined	6	6	Achieved	
Sentinel villages are selected	Number of sentinel villages selected	18	18	Achieved	
Communal and regional authorities sensitive to need for agroecological transition	Number of communal and regional authorities sensitive to need for agroecological transition	75	75	Achieved	
Local and other relevant Innovations to be promoted are selected	Number or local and other relevant innovations selected	NA	14	Achieved	
Community platforms set up in all	Number of community platforms set up	18	18	Achieved	

municipalities involved in project					
Participatory development of village action plans	Number of village action plans	18	18	Achieved	
Identification of volunteers (M-F) to promote agroecological innovations for different interests	Number of volunteers identified to promote agroecological production	18	36	Achieved	
3 exchange visits are organised	Number of exchange visits organized	3	3	Achieved	
Baseline survey for project indicators is conducted and results and shared	NA			Postponed	Planned for project next step: it requires more investment in time and resources and will also raise a lot of expectations in the communities. Hence we think it is more appropriate for next step.
Organization of workshops to share the process		1	1	Achieved	

2.3 Changes in project implementation

(Description of changes in project implementation, including reasons for changes)

2.3.1 Changes in activities (if any): **No change**

2.3.2 Changes in indicator target values (if any): **No change**

2.3.3 Changes in budget allocation (if any): **No change**

2.3.4 Further changes (if any): **No Change**

3. Proof of Impact

Based on the findings from the proof-of-concept, how can the impact of the advisory approach be assessed, regarding:

We are at the early stage of the project and it is too soon for impact assessment

3.1 **Reach** (suitability of the advisory approach to involve / address needs of the target group): *Please provide proof / evidence (e.g. quantitative / qualitative data, disaggregated by sex) supporting your assessment.*

The advisory approach put the target groups at the center of the project design. They were given responsibility for analyzing their context, challenges, identifying activities/measures to implement to improve the advisory approach. It is gender sensitive as for instance at least 540 farmers attended the planning workshop including more than 60% women.

3.2 **Benefit** (direct and indirect benefits of the advisory approach for the target group: e.g. capacity gains, improved skills and knowledge, improved yields / income): *Please provide proof / evidence (e.g. quantitative / qualitative data, disaggregated by sex) supporting your assessment.*

We are at the early stage of the project and it is too soon to assess the capacity gained. Training and other support activities will be undertaken in next step. Meanwhile, the participants that attended the diagnosis session and the participatory village level planning process improved their understanding of the logic for planning from the bottom-up.

3.3 **Scalability** (potential and viability of the advisory approach to be scaled-up and to promote agroecological farm and management practices at large scale). *Please provide proof / evidence (e.g. quantitative / qualitative data, disaggregated by sex) supporting your assessment.*

The agroecological practices identified are technically simple to implement and do not require heavy financial investment at individual level. In addition the scaling will be based on cascading training (farmer volunteers training other farmers). Lastly, local leader and farmers organizations capacity strengthening is at the center of the process; which will allow sustainability. In all, many individuals, households and villages will be reach at a relatively short time and efficiently.

3.4 How have the partners benefited from the proof-of-concept (e.g. in terms of capacity / experiences / networks)? *Please provide proof / evidence (e.g. quantitative / qualitative data, disaggregated by sex) supporting your assessment.*

As mentioned above this is too early to assess the project benefits for its targeted partners. Nonetheless, after having attended all the activities implemented so far, participant have a broader vision on agroecology, participatory processes from the bottom up as well as gender/equity in local development planning.

The same, participating village already have motivated and gender sensitive platforms and other volunteers that will facilitate village development activities regarding agriculture and nutrition in the domain of agroecology. This is a beginning of local people ownership of their localities development process.

3.5 Further impacts (if any)

4. Reflection & lessons learned

2.1 With regard to the proof-of-concept, what has proofed successful and why?

Please provide proof / evidence (e.g. quantitative / qualitative data, disaggregated by sex) supporting your assessment.

Community mobilization to attend all activities implemented in all the villages.

Local leaders and authorities as well as farmers gained more knowledge about AE and showed interest for agroecology and the process we unfolded.

This is because the process was very participatory and actors/participants have their voice heard.

2.2 With regard to the proof-of-concept, what has not worked-out / failed and why?

Please provide proof / evidence (e.g. quantitative / qualitative data, disaggregated by sex) supporting your assessment.

All activities were carried out as planned and there was no main challenge.

2.3 With regard to the advisory approach, what are strengths and what are weaknesses?

Please provide proof / evidence (e.g. quantitative / qualitative data, disaggregated by sex) supporting your assessment.

This approach strength is mainly in its ability to reach a great number of people (men, women, youth, ordinary people, local leaders as well as local authorities) in a relatively short time. In addition it create sense of ownership and enthusiasm among participants. Lastly it holds the advantage of taking into account gender and equity at early stage of the local development planning and implementation.

The main challenge in this process is that as any participatory process, it takes time especially to solidly build local organization capacity. Because of that, support organizations involved in such a process should be patient.

2.3 What adjustments are required, to ensure a successful implementation phase (if any)?

	Size (minor / major)	Type (conceptual / methodological)	How is it addressed in the proposal for the implementation phase?
Adjustment (...)	At this stage we do not see a need for adjustment.		
Adjustment (...)	At this stage we do not see a need for adjustment.		

2.4 What are lessons learned / recommendations for the implementation phase?

The main lessons learned during the five-month implementation of the project are:

- ✚ **Separate groups for vulnerable people such as women and youth in the planning process allows their voices and concerns to be heard**
- ✚ **Context-specific approach allows specificities of each village to be considered;**
- ✚ **the involvement of community and communal authorities in the implementation of project activities has created opportunities for intense exchanges between populations and their authorities.**
- ✚ **the involvement of young people opens up prospects for inter-village collaboration because they belong to organizations that sometimes go beyond their respective villages.**
- ✚ **the village activity planning process has enabled most local authorities to learn more about agroecology. It enabled participants, including support organizations to discover the interest that local authorities have in good natural resources management**
- ✚ **The identification of volunteers for promotion of agroecology has enhanced their self-confidence and consideration by more people in their communities; which created a certain emulation between farmers. Lastly it helped a lot in the mobilization of the population for activities.**
- ✚ **the consortium member organizations have, through this project, strengthened their collaboration and learned more from each other.**

5. Data (see Appendix)

List of supporting M&E data (qualitative / quantitative, disaggregated by sex), e.g. survey, questionnaire, user feedback, etc.

Annexes

Appendix 1: Kick-off Workshop Report

Appendix 2: Harmonization Workshop Report

Appendix 3: List of selected villages

Appendix 4: Exchange Visit Reports

Appendix 5: Village Committee Implementation Workshop Reports

Appendix 6: List of volunteers

Appendix 7: Village Agroecology Action Plans

Appendix 8: Sharing Workshop Report