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BRIEF

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF THE FEED THE FUTURE *APPUI A LA RECHERCHE ET AU DEVELOPPEMENT AGRICOLE (AREA)* ACTIVITY – HAITI

BACKGROUND

The activity *Appui à la Recherche et au Développement Agricole* (AREA) is a multifaceted five-year Feed the Future Haiti initiative that began in 2015 with a $13.7 million award from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Its implementing partners were the University of Florida as the prime implementer and Louisiana State University and the University of Illinois as the sub-partners. The objective was to increase the availability of improved production technologies to farmers and the private sector through effective extension and development of an agricultural innovation system. The three models utilized were Master Farmer (MF), Farmer Field School (FFS), and Exposition to Technology (ET).

METHODOLOGY

The performance evaluation of the AREA Activity used a mixed-methods design:

58	Key Informant Interviews		
12	Focus Group Discussions	**3** MF, **3** FFS, **3** ET, **3** Trainees	**84** Participants
462	Survey Respondents	**12** Long-term trainees	**450** Short-term trainees
3	Direct Observations	Plant Pathogen Lab	Alfatoxin Lab Unit + Weather Station

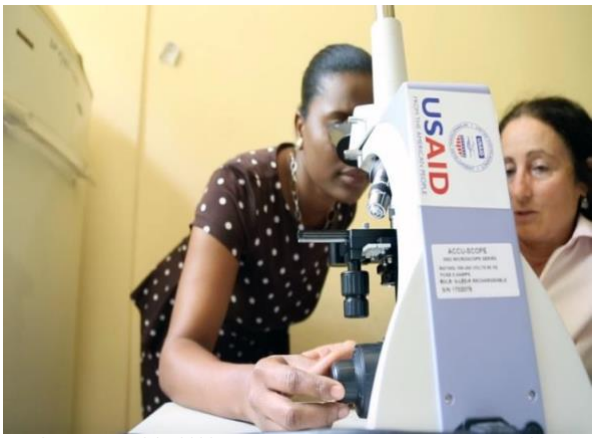
KEY CONCLUSIONS

AREA support to applied agricultural research at local universities:

- AREA demonstrated its understanding that human resources are vital for improving applied research at local universities.
- AREA equipped laboratories and research institutions and supported access to funding for research programs.
- AREA improved training curricula to help prepare better researchers in Haiti.
- AREA invested heavily in training students at the graduate level by providing scholarships to 25 students to complete their master's degrees in the United States.
- AREA's investments in agricultural research produced results. Still, their viability is threatened by the environment, a lack of interest from the government and the private sector, and the activity's lack of an exit strategy.

AREA work in the dissemination of the results from agricultural research:

- Many of AREA's research programs generated mixed results. AREA directly disseminated these findings in its extension activities for farmers, during workshops, and in peer-reviewed journals.
- AREA trained farmers, researchers, and local partner staff extensively, increasing their knowledge about the results of its research and strengthening their capacity to use it.
- Local partners, universities, and research centers that took part in the activity interventions utilized research results—engaging in seed multiplication, extending newly acquired knowledge to other parts of Haiti, and forming networks with other national and international researchers.
- Farmers involved in an extension models experiment noted an increase in their knowledge and the benefits of the promoted technologies.



Source: AREA Q4FY2020 report. Laboratory director at the Ministry of Agriculture learning how to use a new microscope.

KEY CONCLUSIONS (CONT.)

Recommended agricultural extension models as per AREA research:

- Considering the experimental conditions, the MF and FFS models were appropriate to trigger farmers' utilization of technologies in the target zones.
- Farmers appreciated MF and FFS, saying the models met their information needs to make decisions about adopting new technology.

Impact of AREA capacity building interventions:

- AREA performed well in identifying relevant topics and appropriate recipients for the short-term training, which has increased trainees' ability to conduct applied agricultural research and promote effective agricultural extension activities in Haiti.
- The training proved helpful in addressing upskilling needs at research institutions and triggered trainees' behavior change.
- AREA trained graduate students to address the lack of human resources in local research institutions.
- AREA provided some equipment to local laboratories and trained technicians on their use, but these labs are still under-equipped.

Source: AREA Q3FY2019 report. A group of female trainees posing after nutrition training in a plot of Asian Spinach.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation recommends USAID:

	Provide ad-hoc institutional support to local institutions and universities that agree to contract trainees for at least a year following their studies.
	Strengthen local universities sustainably by supporting their graduate program and research activities, developing adequate training curricula, and upgrading labs in local universities.
	Support the furnishing of laboratory equipment at local research institutions to address critical issues in Haitian agriculture.
	Ensure that a plan is rolled out to disseminate research results to local audiences, and not just the scientific community, for future, similar programs.
	Ensure that an exit strategy is designed and implemented during the activity's lifetime.
	Support the utilization of the MF and FFS models in the Kenscoff region to disseminate agricultural technologies and work with Haitian extension services to determine the best extension model for the other regions.
	Strengthen farmers' associations to enable them to play a more substantial role in extension activities.