



Agriculture for Impact Stakeholder Evaluation

Prepared by:	Firetail Ltd: Andy Martin, Ruthann Hughes and Calum Handforth
Date:	May 2012
Version:	2.0 – FINAL

Disclaimer

This is the report of independent evaluators commissioned by Agriculture for Impact.
The views expressed in this report should not be taken as being the views of Agriculture for Impact, Imperial College London or other members of the A4I Partnership

Contents

1	Executive summary	3
2	Introduction	5
3	Views on the project	6
4	Shaping the content.....	12
5	Packaging and presentation	17
6	Maximising use and impact	20
7	Lessons	23

1 Executive Summary

In January 2012, Agriculture for Impact (A4I) convened a partnership to support taking successful smallholder agricultural projects to scale. At the outset of this process, Firetail was commissioned to interview stakeholders who represent the intended users of the Partnership's outputs both in donor countries and Sub-Saharan Africa. The purpose of these discussions was to explore how the materials could be developed to ensure they are of maximum value to stakeholders and the sector as a whole. 25 interviews were conducted between 2nd February and 9th March 2012. This report is an analysis of the findings from these discussions.

Introduction

There is broad interest in the programme among the stakeholders interviewed and a clear appetite for materials on scaling up. Respondents highlight an increased recognition among policy makers, particularly in donor countries, of the importance of agricultural development but say the evidence base on scaling up is limited. They welcome work that will further develop the sector's understanding of scaling up and consider the A4I Partnership well placed to develop and communicate appropriate materials.

Views on the project and its hypothesis

One focus of the interviews was to explore stakeholders' responses to the outline hypothesis for the programme developed by A4I and ODI, summarised in the statement:

The project has defined 'success at scale' to be a reflection of smallholder farmer engagement with markets. A4I argues that since supply chains can be improved, smallholder farmers can be active participants and even the main drivers of agricultural development.

Perspectives on this hypothesis indicate broad support. Many interviewees feel it represents an emerging consensus on tackling a range of problems associated with agricultural development in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA). For the majority the focus on smallholders is right.

Stakeholders from all sectors and across jurisdictions stress that although providing this improved access to markets is key, solutions for the sector are more complex; they caution not to underestimate questions of political economy, policy, governance, infrastructure and land rights.

A couple of dissenting voices are concerned about the smallholder focus; they regard the interplay between actors of different sizes and from different sectors as crucial to addressing the problems within agricultural development and question whether the hypothesis allows for this.

Shaping the content

In terms of the kinds of materials identified as having most value and potential impact, stakeholders state a clear preference for case studies supported by quantitative data. They believe that these should underpin achievable and realistic recommendations providing policy makers with a clear view of the steps to take to enable effective scaling up. For many, a priority is to demonstrate SSA involvement in shaping any recommendations. Stakeholders from across the sample also call for the communication of both failure and success in programme outputs explaining that this approach provides A4I with an opportunity to 'stand out'; until now, the sector is perceived to have focused largely, and sometimes exclusively, on 'what works' thus failing to build on learnings from 'when things go wrong.'

With regards to content, stakeholders readily identify questions that they feel require further attention and analysis. When asked to consider how content should be ordered to be of most use to them and their organisations, interviewees express preference for analysis by value chain and at country level. Overall, income and yields are regarded as the most important measurements of success. There is a general sense that

examples of best practice materials in the field are limited. Stakeholders collectively identify only a limited number of examples that the A4I Partnership can learn from in shaping the content of its outputs.

Presentation and packaging

We also asked for stakeholders' views on how materials should be presented and disseminated to have maximum influence. Most identify the need for a comprehensive set of materials that speak to different stakeholder groups rather than the production of a single report. They feel that these should be delivered via a comprehensive, ongoing communications and engagement strategy. This should include a comprehensive programme of advocacy drawing on the diverse range of networks that A4I and ODI have relationships with.

Interviewees also strongly emphasise the need to create a participatory and living document. There is considerable resistance to presenting materials as finalised products, which stakeholders say can limit engagement with such tools.

Maximising impact

There is much interest in the programme's potential outputs and anticipation around what A4I will produce. True to the desire for a participatory approach, stakeholders want to stay engaged with the programme; they welcome the invitation to participate in the process and call for updates as the Partnership moves forwards.

The stakeholders interviewed make clear that they will, in theory, want to make good use of the materials produced to inform smarter policy development, enhance stakeholder understanding of the sector, provide 'collateral' with which to advocate for supporting smallholder farmers and convene more effective partnerships. They stress, however, that the use and impact of the materials will be contingent on the production of the kinds of materials that they request, as outlined above and detailed in full the body of the main report.

Differentiating between groups

There is broad consistency across audiences on responses to the major issues discussed in the interviews. Where some nuanced difference emerges is in the issues that different groups choose to emphasise, as outlined below. It is important to note that these illustrate how different sectors engage with the issues of scaling up but do not necessarily represent opposing viewpoints. This reaffirms the consensus upon which the A4I Partnership is able to build:

Policymakers in donor countries	Policymakers in SSA (limited base)	Civil society	Private sector
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural development is moving closer to centre stage in political circles. • As a group, donor country policymakers requiring clear evidence of impact to underpin policy decisions. • They expect clear guidance on what to do to tackle the issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSA policymakers emphasise a need for a participatory approach to tackling issues. • There is an indication that face-to-face contact is required to achieve engagement with senior policymakers. • It's important that work is done "with them" not to them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and testing new approaches is important, but there is frustration that short-term funding means potential long-term benefits are not seen. • Civil society is concerned with the challenges in collecting M&E data, and recognise the value of collating this information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of creating an enabling environment for the private sector. • Closer alignment with governments can facilitate improved commercial practices, which deliver benefits to smallholders. • Competition as a measure of success.

2 Introduction

2.1 Aims and Objectives

Agriculture for Impact (A4I) is an independent advocacy initiative led by Professor Sir Gordon Conway, based in the Centre for Environmental Policy, Imperial College London, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It seeks increased and enhanced European government support for productive, sustainable, equitable and resilient agricultural development in SSA, focusing in particular on the needs of smallholder farmers.

A4I has recently convened a partnership to develop materials to support policymakers and other actors in the agricultural sector in taking smallholder agricultural projects to scale. The Partnership, led by A4I comprises the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Firetail Ltd and The Glasshouse Partnership, with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). Each of the partnership organisations will be undertaking separate work programmes within the project. At the outset of the programme Firetail was commissioned to conduct a series of interviews with the intended 'end users' of materials developed through the programme.

The specific aims of this first phase of stakeholder engagement were to:

- Gain a clear picture of the groups that the project is aiming to support
- Explore which content and information different groups need
- Understand how to present and communicate programme outputs
- Discuss how this can be delivered in a way that will maximise impact and increase take up of the recommendations among different groups
- Seek initial responses to the baseline project hypothesis generated by A4I and ODI.

The results from this qualitative work are intended to inform subsequent areas of the A4I Partnership's work. This report presents the key findings from the interviews conducted in this first phase of the Partnerships' stakeholder engagement.

2.2 The interview and reporting process

Firetail completed 25 stakeholder interviews for this work between 2nd February and 9th March 2012.

A large number of organisations are represented in the sample and we heard from UK, SSA, US and EU perspectives:

Table 1: Sample breakdown

<i>Geographic perspectives represented</i>				<i>Stakeholder audience</i>			
UK	US/EU	SSA	Global	Policy: Donor Countries	Policy: SSA	Civil Society	Private Sector
7	8	6	4	14	1	7	3

Interviews were conducted over the telephone, and were based on a semi-structured discussion guide. Discussions varied in length from 30 to 60 minutes.

This report draws out the key themes and comments made in these discussions which inform our recommendations to the Partnership. There is, as illustrated throughout the report, much consensus on the key issues discussed in the interviews across respondents from different regions and sectors. Where nuanced differences in perspectives exist these are drawn out in the reporting. Throughout the document we differentiate between views held by a majority or significant number of respondents, and those raised by just one or two participants.

To respect stakeholders' anonymity quotes are not attributed to individuals in this report.

2.3 Reflections on and limitations of the process

The majority of stakeholders were forthcoming and happy to engage with the programme reflecting an interest in issues related to scaling up and, in some instances, a positive relationship with members of the A4I Partnership.

Engaging with African policy makers presented some challenges. We spoke to one respondent in this group and a number of other interviews were scheduled. However these did not take place and interviewees did not respond to requests to reschedule. Representation from this group is therefore limited. Where possible we have drawn on the experiences some stakeholders have of engaging with SSA policy makers more informally to enhance our understanding of issues which might be of relevance to this group.

The sample of stakeholders interviewed includes a number of DFID representatives. Arranging interviews with others in the department presented some difficulties. As with previous work undertaken for A4I, stakeholders whose focus is on agricultural development appear to engage well with the process. Identifying and interviewing policymakers with a broader portfolio is more challenging. For this programme, one interview was conducted with a policy maker in this position.

These difficulties in engaging with some policymakers highlight a challenge for the A4I Partnership. Despite the widespread belief among stakeholders that there is growing interest in agricultural development, experiences from this phase of work indicates a potential lack of willingness or ability among some policymakers to make themselves available for such work. This may, in part, be explained by a view expressed by a number of stakeholders that senior policy makers want to be presented with clear recommendations for action and are, perhaps, less interested in being involved in an approach which would lead to the production of those recommendations. This reluctance contrasts with the interest shown by the majority of stakeholders who wish to remain engaged with the process.

These are issues for further discussion both among members of the A4I Partnership and with other DFID colleagues in the next phases of engagement.

3 Views on the Project

3.1 Overview

There is a clear appetite among stakeholders for materials linked to scaling up. Many respondents highlight an increased recognition among policy makers, particularly in donor countries, of the importance of agricultural development. However they feel that the evidence base within agricultural development is, at present, limited. As such, they welcome work that will further develop the sector's understanding.

3.2 Perceptions of the A4I Partnership

Interviewees expressed confidence in the A4I Partnership to play a role in tackling the perceived deficit of evidence on scaling up. Only a small number of interviews had been made aware of the 'Leaping and Learning: Strategies for taking agricultural successes to scale' programme prior to the interviews. However the majority had previous contact with A4I and / or ODI and hold them in high regard as credible and expert players in their respective fields.

Respondents' relationships with A4I range from new contacts to long standing partners and there is an assumption, even among those with limited knowledge of the organisation, that as a credible, respected voice in the sector, A4I are well positioned to produce good, strong outputs.

"A4I are good in terms of catalyzing thoughts and ideas around emerging themes..." Donor country

Many explain that Professor Sir Gordon Conway's reputation as a well recognised and authoritative figure in the field will be of value to the programme as it seeks to communicate with and disseminate work among relevant networks and individuals.

There is also positive feedback from several stakeholders regarding ODI. Again, the level of contact interviewees have had with the team varies significantly. Those who have worked closely alongside the Institute rate their experience, knowledge and approach and regard them as leading experts in their field:

"I think the ODI is a fantastic network group" Donor country

3.3 Reactions to the baseline hypothesis

Recognising that there are many different interpretations of 'at scale' ODI and A4I developed an initial hypothesis for the programme to test with respondents in this research. This is summarised in the statement:

The project has defined 'success at scale' to be a reflection of smallholder farmer engagement with markets. A4I argues that since supply chains can be improved, smallholder farmers can be active participants and even the main drivers of agricultural development.

This position acknowledges that scaling up can take many different forms, involving different kinds of intervention – social, political, economic or technological. However, it proposes that at the core of development at scale is the existence of efficient and fair markets which cater to the needs of farmers.

Stakeholders were asked to share their initial thoughts on this hypothesis during the interviews. Their feedback demonstrates broad agreement with the outline hypothesis which resonates with many of those interviewed, reflecting their perspectives on the challenges facing the sector. Several stakeholders perceive the argument to be one that some policymakers are receptive to. Others feel that more needs to be done to encourage stakeholders to consider issues around agricultural development from this perspective.

The majority of stakeholders see market-led development as the most sustainable development route. Respondents believe that accessible and equitable markets are necessary to secure and increase farmer income, alleviate poverty and enable wider agricultural development. Participants do not generally identify alternative agricultural development routes: market-led development is seen as central to all variants of agricultural development outside of pursuing subsistence farming. Respondents emphasise that the development of a market-led approach will contribute to tackling other connected issues such as nutrition and gender issues.

"Markets are absolutely central to growth in agricultural development unless you're focused on just achieving subsistence farming." SSA civil society

"Smallholder farmers are a critical part of agricultural development. From a nutritional perspective, smallholder farmers and women also need to be involved. Engagement with markets is also important to move beyond subsistence. Access to inputs and a place to sell outputs and increase income makes sense from a nutrition perspective." Donor country

It is, however, important to stress that while engagement with markets is seen as beneficial for smallholders and necessary for agricultural development, stakeholders in all groups are clear that a focus on markets alone ignores other significant challenges facing the sector. Interviewees generally agree that questions of infrastructure and political economy will determine the success of a market-led approach. This is explored in more detail in section 3.5.

There are also a small number of interviewees who are critical of the outline hypothesis. A couple see the hypothesis as a 'given', reflecting a long-held belief and express a sense of frustration at the pace of change within the sector. A further two stakeholders strongly contest the smallholder focus of the project and stress that this is potentially harmful given the interdependency between smallholders and others within the sector:

"A development model that starts with the scale of an activity as its basis doesn't sound very sensible... A vision for market development has to be with all players of all kinds ... you shouldn't narrow it to a particular size of player. It could be in the interest of smallholders that other types of units start emerging in this market. You could have medium size, slightly bigger ones interacting with much more creative models..." Donor country

One private sector stakeholder shares their concern about the hypothesis, which is that strategies that drive successful business do not enable an exclusive focus on smallholder farmers:

"Our companies tend to go for a mixed model (rather than smallholder only). A hub-and-spoke model seems more sustainable. We wouldn't argue against commercial farms, as they are an important part of the mix and in practice farmers often pool their land to increase their output" Private sector

These viewpoints may be based on an interpretation of the hypothesis that suggests a focus on direct support for smallholders, rather than A4I's intended approach which is to advocate for the creation of an agricultural system that is inclusive of and accessible to smallholders.

3.4 Smallholder focus

The project's focus on smallholder farmers is the right approach for most interviewees. This signifies a widespread confidence that smallholders can play a greater role in agricultural development, and that engagement with markets is necessary for agricultural development and poverty alleviation.

Stakeholders recognise the centrality of smallholder farmers in agricultural development in SSA. This importance creates an appetite for a better understanding of the extent of smallholder engagement with markets. Access to markets and market inequities are regarded as key barriers to increasing the participation of smallholders in the development process and ones which warrant a greater focus:

"[Engagement with markets is] communicated in some instances but not in a non-compromising, evidence-based, unbiased way. We need an authoritative voice, saying that it can be and should be done. We are in a place to support that dynamic." Multilateral

Stakeholders believe that focusing on smallholder farmers in this project has the potential to *'raise discussions in the political sector'*, with participants confident that the smallholder argument has *'broad receptivity'* to policymakers in both donor and partner countries.

Stakeholders are also vocal about the challenges of developing an effective smallholder focused approach. Smallholders are recognised as a significant, diverse and disparate group with each of these factors presenting particular challenges and opportunities for effective engagement and policymaking:

"Most smallholders are disjointed. They don't have collateral that the financial institutions require so they can't access markets. We need to address the smallholder's capacity to organise themselves as a group to access these financial services... they don't have the knowledge, the research... we need to create awareness that agriculture is like any other business." SSA

Several stakeholders look to the future and the potential and complex long-term impact of addressing these issues for smallholders. The transformation of smallholder agriculture is seen as a necessary precursor for the emergence of alternative sectors and employment in SSA. Several participants note that achieving success in agriculture will inevitably lead to a reduction in the importance of agriculture to the economies of SSA countries and suggest that this point is rarely acknowledged in the sector.

"The best alternative [to agriculture] is to get a job outside of agriculture. But, future generations can't depend on smallholder agriculture for poverty alleviation. Market-led agricultural development gives future generations the opportunity to leave agriculture." Donor country

One stakeholder would want to see reflections on this long-term change for Africa as a starting point in developing appropriate policies:

"We need to find much more sensible context specific views of where agriculture would sit in different countries, in their economies... There are some sad truths behind it. If we want Africa to develop... we should be willing to say it is a sign of success in agriculture that people can start leaving it. These things never get any attention." Donor country

3.5 Infrastructure and political economy

Respondents across sectors and jurisdictions are quick to point out that while the focus on smallholder engagement with markets is important, this is, at all levels linked with broader questions of infrastructure and political economy. As such, they consider it essential that these are considered in conjunction with each other. Interviewees cite several structural problems that affect the market-led approach. Country and regional specificities, structural barriers and land rights present significant challenges to scaling up. A number of interviewees also focus on the importance of access to quality inputs and seed development.

In terms of questions of political economy the majority of respondents believe that significant public sector efforts are required in infrastructural investment, the creation of an enabling policy environment and in extension provision.

Several respondents share a view that some governments in SSA do not provide sufficient support or resources to agriculture explaining that some pursue policies, including export restrictions, subsidies and ineffective land policies, which are detrimental to agricultural development. A number comment that that some African governments have been reinvesting resources generated by agriculture outside the sector. In this case, understanding how to make governments *'do the right thing'* in policy formulation and implementation is considered key. These political difficulties are felt to exacerbate the politicisation of food security and specific crops, reflecting wider tensions in political and budget cycles where positive results are crucial. In contrast, a number of respondents expressed more optimism in relation to this, as one interviewee explains:

"The lion is on the move, you can see more African countries recognising the importance of agriculture." Multilateral

Respondents also call for policymakers to recognise and understand the importance of the private sector, facilitate its involvement and develop closer alignment between the two sectors. The private sector is seen as a critical partner in *'sustainable'* poverty alleviation, and its role in connecting smallholders to markets and value chains is particularly important. However several participants consider it important for government intervention to be limited explaining that markets need freedom for growth to take place.

3.6 Responsibilities of different actors on the sector

As indicated above, interviewees recognise smallholder agriculture in SSA as a complex sector involving a diverse range of actors. Understanding the roles of and relationships between these actors is said to be key and they advise the Partnership to consider these in working on outputs which will contribute to policy and debate in a meaningful way. Collectively, they outline their views on the roles and responsibilities of relevant groups. Views expressed in these discussions are outlined in the grid below:

Table 2: Perceived responsibilities of different sectors within SSA agricultural development

Smallholders	Public Sector	Private Sector	Civil Society	Partnerships
<p>Interviewees describe a wider, more active and more connected role for the smallholders themselves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase farmer strength through collective action and aggregation. • Need to understand why farmers do/don't engage with the market, and how they benefit. • How can the private and public sectors moderate price and other risks? • Several respondents highlighted the importance of considering human capacity, 	<p>Governments play a necessary regulatory role, encouraging the private sector and other actors through creating a conducive environment for investment and development. Respondents note the importance of public sector investment in infrastructure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority see the public sector's role as providing regulatory frameworks. • Interviewees noted that the public sector needs to recognize its capacity, role and the associated limitations of the 	<p>Participants recognise the 'crucial' role for the private sector in engaging smallholders with markets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of understanding the private sector's scope. The private sector provides <i>'the sustainability aspect'</i> and experience of the intricacies of the market. However, the sector had limitations in its role – <i>'equity is the job of governments'</i>. • Interviewees discussed how best to involve the private sector, including ameliorating investment risk, encouraging participation and connecting the 	<p>Several respondents note that civil society has played a considerable role in-country, but the sector's role remains undefined.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs are <i>'still talking more to farmers'</i> than other actors, but this is a <i>'stopgap'</i> measure in the absence of engagement from the private and public sectors. • Civil society can assist in capacity building, drawing on its considerable engagement with the agricultural sector. • One participant sees a central role for civil society in an advocacy and <i>'watchdog'</i> capacity, 	<p>The combined efforts of all actors are necessary for successful agricultural development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public-private partnerships can draw on the strengths of both sectors, and demonstrate <i>'the business of farming'</i>. • The farmer has a role to play: partnerships between farmers and other actors can increase their capacity and strength. • Each sector must recognise its respective priorities – <i>'like CAADP has done'</i> including understanding their

including institutions such as farmer associations and other <i>'facilitators'</i> that directly engage with farmers.	private sector. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rwanda and South Africa were highlighted as countries that facilitate and support private sector innovation and business development. • An accessible <i>'extensive infrastructure'</i> of public-provided extension is necessary to bring farmers out of poverty. 	sector to smallholder farmers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewees also consider the sustainability of the private sector, and how the private sector can be configured to encourage and develop new entrants, leading to more commercial opportunities for smallholders. 	tracking investment and providing <i>'unbiased'</i> analysis of necessary policy changes and their consequences.	scope, limitations and appropriate interfaces. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews refer to the tension between the private sector's focus on sustainability, and the pursuit of equitable markets. • Need to use private sector partnerships.
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

3.7 The hypothesis: other specific challenges and opportunities of increasing smallholder engagement with markets

Stakeholders in both donor and SSA countries identify further challenges, risks and opportunities for the hypothesis.

The primary concern was the potential failure to understand national or regional differences in the project and its recommendations. In this context, interviewees also note the difficulty of achieving country impact when success is dependent on global and regional markets.

SSA respondents identify a further important challenge which is not exclusive to this hypothesis; limited, and often short-lived, project funding models are problematic and potentially damaging to creating sustainable change.

More specific concerns and opportunities are explained below.

3.7.1 Risks, challenges and opportunities for smallholder farmers

When considering challenges, risks and opportunities for the hypothesis, its potential impact on smallholder farmers is a central priority for both donor country and SSA respondents.

Overall, stakeholders feel strongly that the benefits for smallholders outweigh these risks and challenges. They see the potential benefit as greatly significant at personal, community and national levels. Stakeholders note the potential for the hypothesis to increase smallholder knowledge of market opportunities, leading to further increases in income and food security. They also identify specific opportunities which could mitigate some of their concerns. These include increased and more effective use of ICT among farmers to reduce information and other asymmetries. More broadly, they hope that the project offers an opportunity to focus further on domestic markets and buyers, with several respondents believing these to have been unfairly subordinated to export markets.

A number of participants do, however, talk about challenges and potential unintended negative outcomes of this process. Donor country interviewees identify several challenges for smallholders in relation to markets. These include inequitable access, information asymmetry and technical challenges surrounding the credit and payment dynamics. SSA interviewees also voice these challenges and talk further about communication issues, land rights, the challenges inherent in enabling farmer cooperation and successful aggregation, and the barriers preventing access to finance and quality inputs.

When considering the risks associated with pursuing the project hypothesis, several respondents highlight that an increase in market access could potentially lead to reliance by farmers on one crop leaving smallholders

more exposed to market collapse. There are also concerns from donor country and SSA stakeholders that increased market access could come at the expense of staple crop production and household food security:

“An associated risk of improving access to markets is that we get into a situation where smallholders sell off all their produce and then have to buy back staple goods at a higher price. There need to be safeguards in place to prevent this.” Donor country

SSA stakeholders also talk about the broader risks faced by farmers in committing to farming as a business. These include threats from external speculators that can increase food prices significantly, and the challenges of predatory purchasing.

A couple of participants cite potential negative social consequences of focusing on smallholder access to markets. One donor country representative raises the negative effects of income increase on gender equity with the potential to lead to women experiencing greater inequality. Similarly, one respondent says that as smallholders become more ‘successful’ in regards to their agricultural development, differences in levels of wealth between members of the same communities will become more marked. These concerns are countered by other voices who talk about opportunities the hypothesis would deliver in improving gender equality and, ultimately, lifting communities out of poverty.

3.7.2 Engaging the private sector

Donor country respondents identify challenges associated with encouraging the private sector to participate in value chains. In terms of implementation, some are concerned that the private sector will not connect with smallholder farmers in a way that effectively contributes to agricultural development.

Interviewees from SSA share similar concerns, but note the potential for the hypothesis to increase the understanding of commercial actors as to the benefits of engaging further in rural markets. Both donor country and SSA respondents discuss the importance of fostering and strengthening partnership working between the public and private sectors. Highlighting and promoting best practice is seen as an important aspect of this process.

3.7.3 Understanding the role of the public sector

Respondents from both donor and SSA countries note the challenges faced, and posed, by the public sector, some of which tie into a lack of clarity and understanding of the sector’s role and responsibilities. A number feel that increasing transparency on this should be a priority for the sector and many interviewees consider the hypothesis to have the potential to increase awareness among the public sector of the importance of agricultural development:

“The challenge [of scaling up] is resource mobilisation from Finance and Prime Ministers. This is the audience that needs to see this.” Donor country

SSA respondents note particular challenges in demonstrating the benefits of agriculture to the public sector and say that ensuring that the complex and long term implications of policy decisions are understood by policy makers is difficult. One respondent provides an example of this:

“Farmers can only do so much themselves. There’s a role for the public sector, in making an enabling environment. We’re working on maize and rice in Tanzania, but the government has now imposed a ban on maize exports, depressing prices so farmers won’t recover the cost of the crop investment. Next year, farmers will not invest in maize beyond feeding their families. The public sector needs to be better aligned.” SSA

That policies from other countries and international markets have a strong impact on smallholder agriculture exacerbates these challenges to scaling up successes:

“The international market dynamic at the moment isn’t working... in cases such as Sudan. ...The challenge of harmonising policies is significant.” Donor country

For respondents from the private sector and some from other groups, the priority is for the public sector to create an enabling environment for business. It is hoped that closer alignment with the public sector can improve commercial practices and lead to benefits for smallholders.

3.8 Contested issues

During the discussions it emerged that some stakeholders contest a number of issues linked to scaling up access to markets. In most instances, these are technical issues raised by one or two stakeholders but it is important to note, early in the programme, that there is some debate around:

- *The focus on fertiliser.*
- *Understanding the risk profile faced by smallholders, and the payment dynamic.*
- *The ability of micro credit to contribute to wide scale improvements for smallholders.*
- *The impact of agricultural development on diets.*

4 Shaping the content

4.1 Overview

During the discussions stakeholders were asked to reflect on the kinds of materials on scaling up that would be of most value in their roles and organisations. They state a clear preference for case studies and robust, quantitative evidence to underpin realistic and achievable recommendations. Respondents offer their views on how case studies should be shaped with many agreeing that these need to be:

- Country specific
- Data led
- Include project challenges and failures
- Clarify literature positions, debates and weaknesses

Interviewees were also asked to share their views on how the content of materials produced by the Partnership can be developed, shaped and organised to generate maximum impact. Their views on these issues are also outlined in this section of the report.

4.2 Stakeholder preferences for kinds of outputs

Overall, stakeholders state a preference for case studies and robust, quantitative evidence that underpin realistic and achievable recommendations. Respondents believe that case studies can be useful to a wide audience; they can guide decision-making, highlight project requirements and therefore have a significant impact on stakeholders.

There was less interest in other kinds of materials with a limited number of respondents interested in toolkits and benchmark approaches. When discussing the usefulness of toolkits, some stakeholders see these as being produced by other actors as a next step following the publication of evidence and recommendations. Some regard the information and data required to produce effective toolkits as difficult to source, with other interviewees questioning the impact that toolkits can have at a policy level. However, several interviewees noted the usefulness of toolkits in addressing specific questions, such as how to practically access finance and to inform the development of specific programmes.

A number of participants would be keen to see materials linked to, or contribute towards, the development of pilot projects; those with experience in policy development from an African perspective in particular see value in tying this work in with tangible, on the ground activity.

Participants did not offer specific insight on the level of how many case studies they would want to see produced or the format they should take but they do share their thoughts on how these can be effectively communicated. There is assumed confidence in the A4I Partnership that it will be able to produce appropriate materials.

4.3 The importance of data-led recommendations

Stakeholders share the view that policymakers take note of robust, quantitative evidence and expect strong demonstration of impact to underpin policy decisions. As such there is an appetite among many stakeholders working with governments both in donor countries and SSA for more information of this kind to be produced. There is an interest in quantitative evidence that focuses on which interventions are critical, and particularly which can achieve the best return on investment. Data that explains whether increases in income can be attributed to scaling up successes, and which demonstrates sustainability are also regarded as useful tools though there is much discussion around how achievable this is in some instances. A number of interviewees explain that reliable information of this kind can be used to guide government and institutional discussion, consolidating existing knowledge and explaining debates in the sector.

“Data is one of the few ways to convince and governments, especially in Africa, don’t have the necessary data.” SSA Civil Society

“[We] need pragmatic, simple policy and operationally relevant case studies of principles that are identified as critical for scaling up, and concrete case studies of where they’ve occurred.”

Donor country

Throughout discussions around data, participants refer repeatedly to the value that they and other stakeholders place on accuracy and quality analysis suggesting that this needs to remain a priority for the Partnership. As one respondent explains:

“The credibility of the content and analytical work throughout the entire document [is important]. Each case study needs to be tightly scrutinised, and needs to be based on feedback of people in the field.”

Donor country

Equally, there is an understanding among many of those interviewed of the challenges and limitations of producing quantitative data on issues related to smallholders though a number suggest that this is not understood by policy makers themselves.

Alongside the hard data, policy makers and those with experience of working with this group stress that this audience expects clear direction on how to tackle the issues presented to them through data and case studies. Developing a series of usable recommendations which can have an impact on intended target groups is therefore regarded as a key priority for the A4I Partnership and interviewees advise on the shape such recommendations should take. They consider it essential for recommendations to be realistic, reflecting the political, budgetary and contextual realities of both SSA and donor countries. They also feel that content and recommendations should move debates on rather than “reinventing the wheel”.

“It’s difficult to understand what is actionable, but the cost of implementing, its impact on farmers and whether programmes are sustainable at scale are all components.” SSA

“[The document has] got to be compelling in the context of UK domestic cuts.” Donor country

Collectively, those interviewed generate a series of questions which act as a checklist in creating usable recommendations:

- Do they communicate a clear vision?
- Are they achievable on the ground, in their planned contexts?
- Do they map to available and unallocated funding?
- Do they build on current structures / processes? (I.e. it is important to maintain government commitments and enhance rather than duplicate CAADP and other work).
- Do they address gaps and weaknesses in existing research? Do they enrich the debate?

“Recommendations [should] speak to specific funding channels and policy processes... to make sure the recommendations aren’t dropped into the ether. They need to be locked-in to specific processes.”

Donor country

“Resources are limited, and you have to have the right document. It needs to reach the right debates and build on them. It needs to offer innovation and something different.” Multilateral

In the context of these discussions several participants identify a tension between articulating the complexities of the agricultural development sector and the need to provide clear, tangible policy recommendations for decision-makers.

4.4 The importance of communicating success and failure

An issue that is spontaneously raised by respondents from different sectors is the perceived importance for this programme to communicate both success and failure. Many feel that there has long been a culture among those advocating policy change to readily communicate successes but ignore, and therefore fail to build on what is learnt when initiatives fail. A number comment that it is through understanding the extent of success in this way that ‘extrapolation’ of success can occur. They are keen to understand the challenges projects faced in scaling up, including how these difficulties were overcome:

“Discussion of challenges faced in scaling up the intervention [are helpful]: challenges and especially failures can be really helpful. I prefer more information, not less!” SSA

For several interviewees it is taking this more honest and balanced approach that will enable materials produced by the A4I Partnership to stand out.

With regards to celebrating success stakeholders are eager to understand attributes which worked well and why. There is also an acknowledgement that if materials are to resonate with policymakers, it is important to highlight government policies and interventions that have been successful: those responsible will be keen to see these achievements recognised:

“Policymakers need to see their own work and priorities in this. Everyone is so pressed [for time, money and amount of information out there], the challenges are so great and so you need to be highlighting successes.” SSA Civil Society

“Systematic evidence is lacking...the most powerful thing is to focus on examples of success and failure – these case studies are most likely to change behaviors, but not necessarily policies. Talking about where government has been particularly helpful or useful can change policy.” Donor country

When highlighting how success is achieved, participants are interested in exploring the role and scope of each sector, including how to build required capacity in actors. Several interviewees cite the use of champions or ‘transformative agents’. In this context several also mention the value of case studies in understanding when and how to engage the private sector into working in a smallholder context.

When considering successes and failures respondents across all sectors also warn against assuming a ‘one size fits all mentality’ and stress the importance of recognising local, country and regional contexts and specificities. A couple of respondents also discuss the importance of understanding what will fix itself, and where the most pressing or difficult work is located and view these as considerations that the Partnership should be mindful of.

4.5 Current gaps in knowledge and materials

During the discussions, interviewees were asked where they identify gaps in materials, evidence and recommendations. Several call for the programme to clarify literature positions, debates and weaknesses and to build on these existing resources and debates. Others indicate an interest in developing new data.

Beyond this, stakeholders generate a number of overarching questions focusing on understanding the proper scope for each sector, including the parameters of engagement and involvement, and the need to identify key actors and transformative agents. Many expressed interest in an effective, overarching review of existing literature enabling it to link to but provide a new slant on existing discussions and debates.

“Literature is full of best practice. If you have been tasked with this job it means that existing literature is not sufficient or that there is so much that there needs to be some consolidation of what exists.” Donor country

A number of questions relating to specific sectors were also raised as areas for further exploration:

Table 3: Questions for further consideration / research – by sector

Private Sector	Public Sector	Civil Society	Smallholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the big buyers? • Why and when do they choose to work with smallholders? • What are the limitations of the sector? • How can we ensure private sector engagement involves smallholders? • What is currently being traded? Where and how? • How can market information be collated and communicated to support smallholders? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What state actions enable/disable? • How can we make sure that the right policies are implemented? • Where can we find trained individuals (agricultural scientists etc.) to assist the private sector? • How can the government transition from a service provision to oversight role? • For donors: how can donors coordinate actions on the ground? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where can it assist in capacity building? • How can it play a watchdog role? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding current trade patterns and practice. • How to build on knowledge gathered by successful farmer cooperatives / associations? • Understanding training requirements and opportunities.

4.6 Organising the content

A consideration for the A4I Partnership has been how to organise the content of materials developed for the programme. This is not an issue that stakeholders spontaneously raise and does not appear to be a priority for potential recipients of the materials; for most, the quality of the evidence and recommendations takes precedence over the way that information is organised.

When prompted to reflect on this in more detail some stakeholders state a preference for country-focused information, others for value chain analysis and some for a hybrid of the two.

Responses to this appear to be influenced by the kinds of structures in which interviewees work. Organisations that work country-to-country generally prefer a country analysis, with policymakers particularly interested in this format as policy is generally made at a national level. Country analysis highlights the different starting points and unique products, supply chains and challenges present in a national context. Working at the national level also highlights the importance of looking at ‘general principles’ including access to finance, land tenure, biotechnology and the role of the private sector. This level of analysis allows for broad lessons and knowledge sharing, facilitating and developing partnerships. Country-level analysis can also offer opportunities to understand the ‘synergies and dynamics’ between countries, enabling both comparison between domestic and export markets and regional study.

With regard to country-specific case studies, participants would want to see a number of questions addressed including: does an enabling environment exist in that country, and what is the interface between the public and private sectors there? What are the boundaries of scaling up in individual countries? Is it complicated by geographical factors, or farming practices? What was the impact, and how does the intervention or value chain operate in that country context?

In comparison, a number of participants feel that value chain analysis offers further insight into the role and challenges of producers, aggregators, wholesalers and retailers, illustrating where each actor can best play a role and where investment should be targeted. Value chain analysis is said to be helpful in highlighting what does and does not work in a non-geographically specific context; it can provide an understanding of the contexts of specific crops, some of which are highly commercialised, politicised and ‘marketable’. The questions are not as simple as a ‘staple versus cash crops’ analysis.

There is little interest in a commodity-led analysis, for two main reasons. Firstly, the problems being addressed through this programme are often generic challenges and therefore cut across different crop types. Secondly, a commodity-led analysis does not align with the approach that most stakeholders take to agricultural development in their work and organisations.

4.7 Indicators of success

During the interviews stakeholders were asked to comment on what indicators they would use to identify success in relation to scaling up. For the majority of respondents, increases in income and yields are the primary indicators of success; they are the measures they work with most regularly in their roles and are regarded as an effective means of assessing poverty alleviation and the situation of smallholders. There is a broad assumption that other indicators of success fall out of work to improve these two key measures. Several add that increases in yields can be used to demonstrate impact and can act as a proxy or additional indicator to clarify increases in income.

However, there are also perceived limitations and challenges to using increased incomes as a measure of success. In contrast to those who talk about this being a measurable entity others highlight the technical challenges of capturing such data:

“It’s hard to get hold of that information but valuable to get hold of it if you can. Where are the costs and margins in the value chain? Where are there opportunities to increase the position of smallholders?” SSA Civil Society

Several respondents also warn that improved aggregated income does not always translate into increased income for smallholders, and that it is important to gain an accurate understanding of which actors and sectors are benefiting from increased income. Some stakeholders consider it necessary to disaggregate income increases for all participants in the value chain in order to look more widely at economic productivity.

There were some interesting differences in how different audience groups would measure success with private sector and civil society participants focusing on simpler measurements while donors tend to look at more varied indicators. Private sector interviewees focus on elements of competitiveness and connectivity as useful metrics including seeing an increased number of SSA firms competing in the global market. Those closest to the private sector also comment that if value chains are globally competitive, then they would be adaptive and sustainable enough to support other development priorities. When value chains are not competitive, they are not able to deliver beyond their commercial objectives, if at all.

A number of participants from other sectors cite further indicators of success that they would like to see measured. These include

- Improved wellbeing among smallholders and their communities (defined by rates of infant mortality, access to education etc.)
- Gender equality; including investigating shifts in empowerment, confidence and control over resources
- Improved nutrition, including the development of more diversified diets and reductions in child under nutrition, as an indicator of success (with one interviewee adding that nutrition can also be used to understand gender relations)
- Increased inequalities within communities (counter intuitively)
- Reductions in the environmental impact of agriculture (visible through diversification in production and behavior)
- Addressing production loss
- Rates of acquisition
- Numbers of smallholders linked to farmer associations

“Agriculture that doesn’t improve the nutrition status, of women and children in particular, is hollow growth.” Donor country

“Increasing impact is about increasing competitiveness in a value chain.” Private sector

4.8 Time scales

In considering timescales for this programme and its anticipated impact, most respondents initially look to the medium term expecting to see initial signs of change in 3-5 years. There is, however, also an expectation that work should be seen and promoted as being on-going with results revisited at a later date. Circa 8-10 years is suggested as an appropriate time scale in which to see sustained change established.

“Our main interest is can we see increasing income over time? A transformational timeframe is 10-15 years. The problem is, many programmes have 3-year lifespans, and crop cycles can be several years long. Increased income for smallholders can be noticed a lot quicker.” SSA Civil Society

There is a widely held view that achieving significant and sustainable change in the sector takes longer than current funding structures allow for; several respondents note that short term funding potentially prevents programmes from achieving long-term success. There is a desire for acknowledgment of this from funding bodies but equally a sense of urgency around improving current practice. Some interviewees hope that evidence of initial change can emerge in the medium term to demonstrate the value of ongoing funding:

“What is missing in the argument is still hard evidence of impact. Convincing, reliable, robust, third party data. These gaps in knowledge provide an excuse to potential funders not to fund, so are dangerous.” Donor country

4.9 Examples of best practice

There is a strong sense among many of those interviewed that effective materials on scaling up are limited. Collectively they generate a short list of examples of best practice citing various reports, technical documents, organisations and initiatives.

- With regard to reports, the World Development Report 2008 is said to have ‘some robust information’, and the Foresight Report was cited as having useful examples that link to the wider sector and literature. More broadly, Monitor’s agricultural study was highlighted by two participants, with another recommending a drinking water report produced by Ashoka’s consulting arm: ***“It provides an excellent level of depth, concrete examples, suitable levels of data and identified different models available across the globe.” Donor***
- Recommended technical documents were The Lancet’s nutrition work, which was seen by one participant as having changed the discussion and investment surrounding nutrition – ‘it was a real winner’. Another respondent recommended IFPRI’s upcoming scaling up work.
- The WFP and its P4P programme were positively cited by one respondent as successfully documenting case studies over time. WFP was seen by the same participant as effective at ‘getting stakeholders around the table each year to learn’. Its ‘trusted role’ in-country due to food aid provision also enables it to attain government buy-in.

Initiatives mentioned by interviewees included the Scaling up Conservation Agriculture with Trees programme, examples of scale in the sugar (and other cash crops) sector, and one respondent noted that the Gatsby Foundation is ‘leading investment’ in Tanzania’s cotton sector, including supporting the adoption of contract farming.

5 Packaging and presentation

5.1 Overview

Another focus of this stakeholder engagement is to understand the format in which materials should be presented and communicated to ensure that they can have maximum impact.

When asked to reflect on this many of those interviewed emphasise the need for a comprehensive set of materials to respond to recipients’ varying needs, preferences and expectations and for this to be disseminated through a considered communications strategy which delivers ongoing engagement across a variety of channels and networks.

5.2 Producing materials

There is broad feeling that a one-size-fits-all document is not an appropriate response to the challenges that the A4I Partnership is seeking to address. Stakeholders support the production of different products for different audiences including policy briefs and recommendations. Policymakers expect detailed and robust evidence to be available, but they themselves will take note of short policy briefs with reference to wider literature and debates pointing to a need for short, digestible documents.

A number of respondents suggested developing a multimedia approach including film which is considered effective in influencing some policy makers. Practitioners are perceived to make use of more detailed and technical reports and tools indicating a market for these kinds of products.

“For policymakers, you need a one-page document with key soundbites that anyone can use, backed up with data and information. [They] need to see evidence of success. You can also produce larger documents, of 4, 8 pages – and then the full document for non-policymakers and for reference.”
SSA Civil Society

5.3 Communications Strategy

The production of a comprehensive range of materials is felt to require a similarly diverse communications strategy. Stakeholders indicate that different dissemination models will work for different audiences and that, to be of widespread interest and relevance, the Partnership’s communications strategy should include the sharing of documents, personal engagement and an online presence.

The electronic sharing of documents is said to be helpful in terms of facilitating further dissemination; the practice of circulating relevant documents with colleagues and partner agencies is seemingly widespread. The majority of stakeholders see face-to-face advocacy as key to building relationships with some politicians and policymakers. This could include an A4I presence at existing events, knowledge-sharing workshops and seminars outside of a political context, and attendance at high-level meetings with senior decision makers. Stakeholders identify Professor Sir Gordon Conway as an ‘asset’ in engaging audiences, and expressed confidence in his ability to connect with decision-makers.

Interviewees also regard it as important for the Partnership to have an online presence allowing A4I to engage audiences with a limited ability to attend meetings, and also to act as a central project resource for use in conjunction with other communications methods. Webinars are seen as a useful tool for communicating research and conclusions and a number would like to see the development of online tools enabling a wider audience to be involved in advising on and refining materials as they are developed. One participant views blogs as a useful channel.

One stakeholder in Africa cautions the use of online channels saying that any approach must be usable in an African setting and accessible to those on slow or unpredictable connections.

A final comment made by a number of stakeholders with regards to dissemination is for the production of materials to be timed to coincide or engage with major events in the international and agricultural development calendars. They feel that this will enhance the Partnership’s ability to draw attention to and encourage engagement with the programme’s outputs in a busy sector. Participants consider it important to ‘prime’ audiences prior to publication, making stakeholders aware that materials are being developed.

“[A4I] need a high-profile seminar, not in a Parliament but a high-level technical meeting or seminar. [It should feature] the research team, practitioners from different agencies, and key public and private sector stakeholders. Perhaps this could be jointly supported by the World Bank, IFAD and any companies from the private sector mentioned in the document’s conclusions.” Multilateral

“For Presidents, they’ll be more persuaded by Gordon having breakfast with them in Tunis.” Donor country

“Multiple channels are best... Targeting a few individuals in DFID – advisers and above – allows a document to circulate. [A4I should] target Directors as well, as they’ll ask for advisers to prepare summaries and this circulates the document.” Donor country

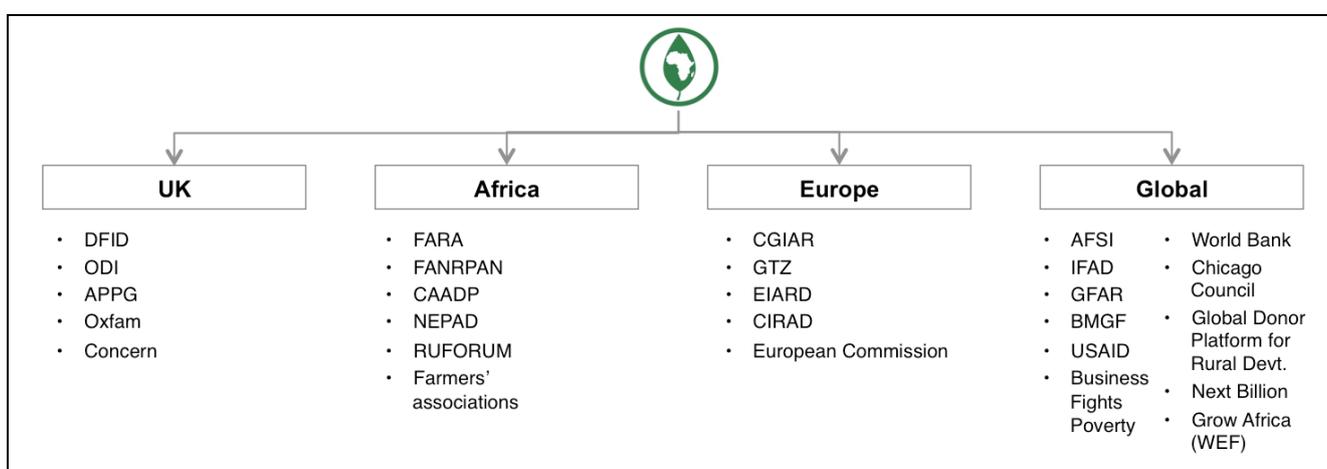
“Online is tricky. It’s accessible but there’s so much out there that it’s hard to keep track. It can be useful as a support system to workshops.” SSA Civil Society

“The reputation of the authors, the distinction between contesting knowledge and building upon existing practice – both are valid approaches but timing is important as to how they’re received. Also, the quality of information, recommendations and data is important.” Donor country

5.4 Making effective use of networks

Stakeholders recommend using existing policy, sector and wider networks to disseminate the project’s outputs. This is seen to be the most effective approach in engaging audiences. The challenge facing the Partnership in this respect is the breadth of ‘relevant’ networks identified by stakeholders. Collectively, participants generate an extensive list of networks but struggle to say conclusively which are most central and likely to deliver maximum impact. The networks mentioned are listed in the table below:

Table 4: Networks for dissemination



Many participants express confidence in A4I to develop an effective dissemination programme; there is an assumption that the team will have highly developed networks and an understanding of which players and groups are most important to engage.

Several respondents specifically note the importance of communicating with donors, with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation repeatedly cited as an important network to consider given their reach and profile. A couple of interviewees talk about the limitations of using some networks both in terms of organisations’ capacity to be involved in effective dissemination and the risk of being too closely aligned with individual bodies which could compromise the independence of outputs.

“[They should look at] Gates, USAID and the EC. The first two are most useful for DFID.” Donor country

“Maybe [use] NEPAD, but they’ve very overstretched and trying to communicate too many issues.” Donor

“Donors have strong convening power, especially Gates. You don’t want to be too associated with just one donor, and don’t necessarily want them in the room either to make sure the discussion is free.” SSA Civil Society

“Gates is able to do a lot, if you can convince them.” Multilateral

5.5 Ensuring continued engagement

Calls for a wide-ranging communication strategy reflects many stakeholders’ interest in creating a ‘living document’ and on-going campaign around the A4I Partnership. There is resistance among a significant number of stakeholders to presenting materials as finalised products.

“I think it’s important to make it a living document. A paper is just launched and then goes away. You need something as a reference, an active tool. You need to understand how to make people go back, make it not static but make a conversation that continues around and after the paper.” Donor

In order to ensure the document comprises relevant, actionable and useful recommendations, many stakeholders want to see partners, particularly representatives of groups who will be affected by the issues involved in shaping the recommendations. One donor country respondent explains why this is particularly important in the African context:

“[Reception by African audiences] depends on the extent to which African policymakers and civil society are consulted...Link the document to the CAADP and other work, and make sure it’s not presented as an outsider perspective. The insider/outsider problem is significant” Donor country

Others explain that creating a living, evolving approach enables materials to reflect and respond to changes within this complex sector as they occur, ensuring they remain relevant. Participants also feel that this shift toward encouraging active engagement will increase use and impact of any outputs though fostering credibility of outputs produced. A couple of interviewees suggest a Wiki style approach to generating, refining and sharing ideas.

5.6 Examples of Best Practice

Interviewees struggle to identify many examples of best practice in packaging and presentation that the programme can learn from:

“There hasn’t been a nuanced or an analytical or transformative discussion that enhances the dynamics [of the sector] like this document could do.” Donor country

Individual interviewees highlight the following three examples as having particular strengths:

- One donor country participant is enthusiastic about IFPRI’s 2020 Vision Initiative scaling up work. This programme has commissioned twenty policy briefs in order to review scaling up experiences, including future lessons. The draft briefs are currently being revised, with production expected in June or July 2012. A further interviewee is more critical of IFPRI’s work, on the basis that it makes unrealistic claims.
- Purchase for Progress (P4P) is cited by one interviewee as an example of how to use a range of communication methods for different audiences:

“They’re multi-nodal. They issue a weekly P4P flash update, with videos, an annual report on their website and other engagement too.” Donor country

- The World Watch Institute is mentioned by one respondent as a strong example of creating a living document, although it is regarded as being more practitioner focused:

“The Institute sourced funding for the website and blog to continue past publication to continue detailing successes.” African Civil Society

6 Maximising use and impact

6.1 Overview

Stakeholders from different sectors are keen to see outputs produced by the A4I Partnership achieve maximum impact and share their views on how this can be achieved. There is much interest among those interviewed in using these materials within their roles and organisations provided that these are developed in line with their needs as consumers. Equally there is a strong understanding of the challenges facing A4I in working to achieve and measure sustained change through its work.

6.2 Achieving impact

Stakeholders feel that there is openness across different sectors to engaging with information on scaling up smallholder agricultural successes in SSA. There is therefore confidence among those interviewed that if the programme's outputs are developed in line with stakeholders' needs and expectations (as outlined in this report) they and others in donor countries and SSA will receive the materials positively and make good use of them. This said, stakeholders do not underestimate the challenges of achieving impact through this programme and offer insights into issues they urge the Partnership to be mindful of.

Some of the challenges identified are common to other campaigns and advocacy programmes. Accurate attribution of impact in a field heavily populated by a diverse range of players is extremely challenging. The mass of information emanating from different actors, albeit often of poor quality in interviewees' minds, presents difficulties in enabling any programme outputs to stand out from other literature.

They also point to the broad and significant challenge of achieving public and political engagement at a time of uncertainty and austerity in international development. This is one of the drivers behind their calls for recommendations to be directive, move the debate on and, at the same time, speak to existing funding channels and policy processes. Within this, there is recognition of the difficulty of understanding and reflecting the breadth of political, infrastructural and economic issues that they feel provide the backdrop to increasing access to markets.

A number of stakeholders also talk about specific local or regional barriers to engagement with the process. One example of this is seen in relation to potential responses to the programmes' work in Tanzania and Ethiopia; one respondent says that the embedded reliance on government and historical distrust of the private sector in these countries may lead to some resistance to materials produced.

6.3 Intended use

Provided that outputs meet their expectations in terms of content, design and dissemination, the stakeholders interviewed express a genuine interest in making use of the materials. They offer insights into how these might be employed in their respective organisations or sectors.

In interviews with both donor and SSA stakeholders, participants say materials produced will play a valuable role in increasing sector knowledge both within and outside of their organisations:

"We would use it for talking points, internal discussions and use it for messaging as much as possible. We'd put it on our website and link it to our thematic groups. We'd also invite Gordon to talk if he would be interested." Donor country

Expanding on this, donor country stakeholders anticipate using the document to promote and guide discussion across the sector, to convene effective partnerships and to highlight areas requiring further research. For government officials, the indication is that the project would potentially inform smarter policy development, both at a departmental level and in influencing country officers.

"We need the analysis to tell us where to invest to strengthen the research base. What does and doesn't work? There's a need to assess where evidence is weak. The document can help us set priorities for our work." Donor country

"These discussions, and the materials, will help how donors work [allocate funding, decide on projects] and how recipients work [policies implemented, programmes supported]." Donor country

Other stakeholders from donor countries, especially NGOs see the project as having the potential to enhance their understanding of the sector and to add to their 'collateral' with which to advocate for supporting smallholder farmers.

Those interviewed in SSA see the document as having the potential to inform smarter policy development and project design. This includes raising the profile of successful programmes, highlighting approaches to replicate or avoid, and using the document to leverage funding:

“I always want to pair information with tools, to make sure that the tool can be used correctly. The more actionable the material is, if it’s a discussion, case study etc., the better. Recommendations need to be as concrete and actionable as possible.” SSA Civil Society

Stakeholders in this context also shared with their donor country counterparts an anticipated role for the document in promoting and guiding discussion and in convening partnerships.

6.4 Monitoring and evaluating influence

There was significant and unprompted discussion in many of the interviews about the importance of effective monitoring and evaluation of the Partnership’s work. Stakeholders indicate that this is key to developing and implementing effective and sustainable change.

However it is clear that respondents have different expectations of how M&E can and should monitor success and influence, highlighting a potential gap between the views of policy makers and the private sector. Policy makers, including those in DFID and in SSA expect M&E to track success, failure and impact in detail. This correlates with calls made by interviewees from this sector for commercial organisations to play a stronger role in collating such data.

In contrast, the private sector is more focused on mapping success through increases in jobs and commercial achievement. Whilst they are tracking other indicators, such as the number of farmers connected to the value chain, representatives from the sector explain that collating data on issues beyond this does not sit naturally within the scope of their work. This is especially seen to be the case for Small and Medium Enterprises and cooperatives that lack the M&E capabilities of larger firms.

Stakeholders from different sectors also discuss the challenges of undertaking meaningful quantitative evaluation in a context of disparate farmers, development projects and limited technology. Several respondents question whether the costs incurred can be justified by the data produced, which is often of limited quality and value. There are difficulties in attribution and projects are often not close enough to smallholders to successfully assess impact. Several stakeholders also highlight the differences in indicators between countries as presenting further challenges to effective M&E, and talk about the challenges this poses for scaling up initiatives:

“A common or core set of indicators between donors and partner countries is very critical for scaling up. Donor assistance is too fragmented and means we’re working against scaling up every day!”
Donor country

6.5 Examples of Success

In order to set the work of the A4I Partnership in context, stakeholders also shared their experiences of campaigns and initiatives that have influenced policy development. These are outlined in the grid overleaf:

Table 5: Examples of successful campaigns and initiatives

Campaigns	Initiatives
<p>Stakeholders generated an albeit limited list of campaigns which have influenced thinking among relevant policymakers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The latest Oxfam and Save the Children campaigns were highlighted by one respondent, with another citing Save the Children's DFID lobbying efforts. • The 1,000 Days/SUN Initiative was mentioned by two respondents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>"[SUN] demonstrated the need to build an evidence base and drive global awareness, which it relatively achieved" Donor country</i> • With regard to gender, one interviewee highlighted the usefulness of both the FAO State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11 report and the World Bank's gender focus in its World Development Report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>"Both... pulled together the best research in the world – finally... [having the] most solid data available in one place is invaluable" SSA Civil Society</i> • In the political sphere, one respondent noted the success of Ban Ki-moon's campaigning, Robert Zoellick's engagement efforts and President Obama's commitment to the L'Aquila pledges. 	<p>Several respondents highlighted rural development examples of working at scale.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scaling success of financial services was mentioned by a few interviewees. • More technical projects mentioned by individual respondents were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CABI Plantwise Plant Clinics. ○ IRRI's Irrigated Rice Consortium (South East Asia), its ecology-based approach to rural management (Myanmar, Indonesia) and their rice programme (Guangdong Province). ○ SDC Post-harvest losses programme (Latin America, now being scaled in SSA). ○ Pan African Bean Research Alliance. ○ Nurture project run by Coca-Cola with BMGF and Technoserve. • One respondent highlighted the successful eradication campaigns against river blindness, tuberculosis and malaria, however they noted that the challenges faced by the agricultural sector are different.

6.6 Continued engagement with interviewees

It is clear from the interviews conducted at this stage of the A4I Partnership that many respondents want to engage further with this programme and all interviewees are supportive of A4I's efforts in undertaking this project. In terms of future involvement the majority of those interviewed say they are open to future contact from the Partnership in terms of:

- Further discussions and information on how the programme is developing, its direction and timelines.
- Updates on Firetail's work and learning about other stakeholders' priorities.
- Receiving and commenting on the materials produced.
- Sharing case studies.
- Learning about the programme's achievements through its monitoring and evaluation activity.

The discussions indicate that maintaining a relationship with stakeholders contacted at this stage of the Partnership's work will play an important role in encouraging engagement with the final outputs.

7 Lessons

There is broad support for the A4I Partnership among those interviewed; they identify a clear need for materials on scaling up and consider the Partnership to be well placed to develop and disseminate such materials. The majority of stakeholders endorse the programme's baseline hypothesis but warn that it needs to be considered alongside issues of political economy and infrastructure, recognising national and regional specificities. Other conversations indicate the importance of positioning the programme as one that advocates the creation of an agricultural system that is inclusive of and accessible to smallholders, as opposed to one whose exclusive focus is on providing direct support to this group.

Overall, stakeholders share A4I's desire to see the materials used widely and, ultimately, to have a positive influence on the agricultural development in SSA. Their views on issues to consider in working toward this goal form a series of guidelines for developing materials which the Partnership may wish to consider as it develops and delivers subsequent phases of its work:

Generate user friendly outputs: future use of the materials produced is said to be premised on their being actionable, realistic and complementing existing political and organisational priorities and structures rather than requiring a fundamental shift in these.

Communicate a clear vision: to encourage engagement, the programme should develop and communicate its remit and vision clearly in a way that moves the debate on while leaving end users with a clear sense of required 'next steps'.

Capitalise on communicating success and failure: there is an opportunity for A4I to produce materials which stand out and achieve impact by presenting balanced information on success and failure in project development and implementation.

Remain relevant and credible: it is important to maintain and build on the credibility that members of the A4I Partnership already command. Influencing the intended groups demands the production of reliable data and rigorous scrutiny of evidence.

Develop and demonstrate a participative approach: for SSA audiences particularly, successful impact will be linked to SSA involvement in generating recommendations. Developing living tools that enable stakeholders to actively engage with materials brings potential benefits to the programme across different regions.

Continue to value stakeholders as key assets: it will be important to capitalise on the goodwill demonstrated by interviewees' willingness to participate at the outset of the programme and for this to underpin the work of the Partnership as it moves forward.