

Terms of Reference

Undertake a Scoping Study for the Ukama Ustawi Learning Alliance

February 2024

A. BACKGROUND

The Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (www.asareca.org) and Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research for Development in Eastern and Southern Africa (www.ccardesa.org) are participating in the implementation of the One CGIAR-led Ukama Ustawi (UU) initiative which aims to support climate-resilient agriculture and livelihoods in 12 Eastern and Southern African (ESA) countries comprising: Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Madagascar, Rwanda, Uganda South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The Learning Alliance (LA) is a vital component of the UU initiative, as it supports learning around diversified maize-based farming systems and innovation (agribusiness, policy, scaling) in ESA. It's a demand-led collaborative knowledge-sharing network established in ESA between CGIAR, CCARDESA, and ASARECA. It is intended to be a collaborative model to implement the CGIAR-CAADP XP4 Knowledge Management Framework. It's centered on building relationships, effective communication, trust, and mutual understanding with regional organizations to create a sustainable and collaborative learning environment. The UULA was established in partnership with CCARDESA, ASARECA, FARA, and AKADEMIYA2063 to enable UU to engage with National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) and regional bodies. It builds on the Knowledge Management Framework co-developed with CAADP XP4 partners (FARA, ASARECA, CCARDESA) and other stakeholders. This framework is centered around bringing upfront existing agricultural knowledge (identified, acquired, created, shared, captured, and applied) in a holistic, oriented, and systematic manner, such that its relevance contributes to addressing the needs and achieving the purpose of the end-users or beneficiaries (individuals or organization). The LA is a multi-stakeholder platform whose implementation will involve various stakeholders, ranging from smallholder farmers and extension services to governments and enterprises, as well as advocates for gender equality and social inclusion (GESI). By providing a structured network for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and innovation, the LA enables these diverse voices to work together effectively and offers a pathway for scaling up impactful practices.

The overarching objective of UULA is to *support learning around diversified maize-based farming systems and innovation* (agribusiness, policy, scaling). The specific objectives are to: **(i)** curate knowledge on maize mix-based farming systems in ESA and surrounding innovation; **(ii)** repackage knowledge; **(iii)** share and exchange between NAROs partners; **(iv)** foster connections and linkages between CGIAR and local research organizations, and **(v)** provide opportunities to national and regional research organizations (NAROs) partners to engage, test and innovate.

B. JUSTIFICATION

Knowledge management plays a vital role in agricultural development, enabling researchers, farmers, and extension workers to exchange valuable information and innovative practices. While knowledge management is important in promoting innovation and sustainable development in diversified maize-based farming systems in ESA, several challenges persist. These challenges can hinder the effective acquisition, organization, and dissemination of knowledge and limit innovative practices' successful implementation and scaling up. For instance, despite the wealth of agricultural research conducted in Africa, the dissemination of findings to farmers and extension workers is often inadequate (Salami et al., 2010; Maertens et al., 2021; Fabregas et al., 2022). Research findings remain trapped in academic journals, inaccessible to those who need them the most.

Many farmers, especially those in remote and marginalized areas, face challenges in accessing relevant and timely information and technologies. Limited infrastructure, such as internet connectivity, hinders their ability to access digital platforms, market information, and online resources. This lack of access inhibits their capacity to adopt innovative practices and leverage agribusiness opportunities. Also, the availability of knowledge does not guarantee its effective dissemination and utilization. Weak knowledge-sharing networks and limited collaboration among stakeholders hinder the flow of information between research institutions, extension services, policymakers, and farmers. The absence of platforms for sharing experiences, lessons learned, and best practices slows down the adoption and scaling up of innovations across the farming systems. Moreover, a major gap identified by the CGIAR-CAADP X4P partners is the need for more systematic knowledge sharing and learning opportunities between CGIAR and research and development. At the same time, it has been recognized that regional initiatives such as UU can play a critical role in bridging this gap. Strengthening knowledge-sharing networks, investing in research and extension services, creating supportive policy environments, and building capacity for scaling up are essential steps towards overcoming these challenges and promoting sustainable innovation in diversified maize-based farming systems in ESA. Also, the LA aspires to facilitate practical application by providing small innovation grants to National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) and advisory services. These grants enable NARS to test and put into action the insights gained from UU, tailored to their respective regions, catalysing the broader adoption of innovative practices, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of agricultural development efforts in the ESA countries covered by the UU initiative.

To better understand the context of these challenges as well as identify key critical gaps that may constitute significant barriers to operationalization of UULA and realization of its goals and objectives, there is need to conduct a scoping study. The study will serve as a foundational step in shaping the goals, strategies, and collaborative efforts of the UULA, ensuring it effectively addresses the challenges and opportunities in diversified maize-based farming systems in the ESA region. It's therefore against this background that ASARECA and CCARDESA wish to engage the services of a competent and knowledgeable consultant to undertake a scoping study for the UULA focusing on the UU initiative countries.

C. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall objective of this consultancy is to undertake a scoping study and develop concrete recommendations to guide Knowledge Management and Learning (KML) around diversified maize farming systems in ESA.

The specific objectives of the assignment include:

1. Understand the existing gaps, especially capacity and knowledge gaps among the NAROs and other like-minded stakeholders, with regards to the implementation of the UULA and develop a policy brief.
2. Establish mechanisms for effective sharing and exchange of knowledge between One CGIAR and National Agricultural Research Organizations (NAROs) and other partners.
3. Establish the status of Learning Alliances in the ESA region, their roles and services and propose a framework for collaboration with UULA that leverages on complementarity and harnessing synergies.
4. Evaluate the current state of innovation in agribusiness, policy, and scaling among the LA partners related to diversified maize-based farming systems

5. Propose M&E framework for monitoring and tracking the success and impacts of the UULA

D. SCOPE OF WORK

To achieve the above objectives, the Consultant is expected to undertake the following specific tasks:

- Undertake a detailed needs assessment to map out gaps and opportunities with regards to the implementation of UULA. This will entail: (i) identifying various gaps such as knowledge gaps, capacity gaps including human, financial and infrastructural gaps, as well as other gaps; (ii) identifying key gaps, opportunities, entry points within the NARES hubs for building or strengthening knowledge; and (iii) provide a description of how databases and knowledge hubs are used to support farmers make agricultural based decisions based on (ii) above.
- Identify mechanisms for effective sharing and exchange of knowledge between One CGIAR and National Agricultural Research Organizations (NAROs) and other partners.
- Map out the existing Learning Alliances in the ESA region and assess their functionality in terms of: (i) roles and services provided; (ii) propose a framework for collaboration between UULA and other LAs that leverages on complementarity and harnessing synergies; (iii) develop an inventory of current platforms, alliances, partnerships to build and avoid duplication; (iv) assess the needs of key stakeholders (NAROs, CGIAR, Farmer Groups, CSOs, NGOs) and their interest to participate in the UULA.
- Identify potential areas for collaboration between the One CGIAR and NAROs
- Identify best practices, success stories, and challenges in agribusiness, policy, and scaling within the specified context.
- Identify strategies that UULA can employ to spur innovation in agribusiness, policy, and scaling related to diversified maize-based farming systems
- Identify areas where capacity building is needed among NARO partners and other stakeholders both in terms of human resources and infrastructure directly required to support the operationalization of the LA.
- Identify the different knowledge perspectives among the different stakeholder partners considering youth, gender, ethnicity, and language
- Identify barriers to sharing knowledge (cultural, language, intellectual, and data protection policies, infrastructure, capacities) as well as mechanisms that the NAROs can use for harnessing knowledge from the farmer organizations.
- Assess the existence or lack of and functionality of knowledge hubs in the target countries.
- Develop an Inventory of good and bad practices in learning alliances.
- Assess the necessary resources to implement knowledge-sharing activities (human resources, technologies, etc)
- Develop a policy brief of the findings.
- Propose Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for tracking the performance of the Learning Alliance (LA) as well as measuring its impact. This will also entail developing a results framework complete with indicators, targets, and baseline values.
- Collect baseline data for key performance indicators for the proposed set of indicators.

E. METHODOLOGY

The Consultant is expected to propose the methodology for implementing the assignment including a sampling strategy. At the bare minimum, the consultant is expected to undertake: a desk review, online searches, and key informant interviews. This will develop a set of tools for capturing the required information, and the tools will be validated by the LA partners (ASARECA, CCARDESA, IWMI, and ILRI). The Consultant will analyse the data collected

and come up with a report for the scoping study which shall be validated by the stakeholder partners during a validation workshop.

F. DELIVERABLES

The Consultant shall deliver the following outputs:

1. Final inception report articulating an agreed methodology for implementing the assignment.
2. Final set of validated tools for data collection
3. Final scoping study report incorporating comments from the validation workshop as a set of recommendations.
4. A policy brief about the study
5. Deck of presentation slides for the inception and scoping study reports.

G. QUALIFICATIONS AND WORK EXPERIENCE OF THE CONSULTANTS

- At least 5-10 years' experience in knowledge management for agricultural development sector as well as capacity development, needs and capacity assessments, and monitoring and evaluation.
- Ability to organize meetings, calls, and documents that may require the input of multiple sources.
- Proven ability to work both independently and as part of a team.
- Experience in similar assignments (knowledge management assessments, capacity strengthening for organizations, partnerships strengthening).
- Experience on survey design and data collection methodologies including online data collection techniques as well as development of survey tools.
- Experience in working in Eastern and South African countries.
- Knowledge of French would be an added advantage.
- Experience in gender and youth mainstreaming would be an added advantage.

H. DURATION

The consultancy is expected to take a maximum of 20 working days spread across the period between 1st April and 21st May 2024. The Consultant is strongly encouraged to finalize the assignment within the allocated timeframe.

I. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Individual consultants are advised to submit their proposals (technical) to the address indicated in the Application Section 11 below. The proposal for this consultancy should comprise of the following:

- (a) An understanding of the consultancy requirements.
- (b) Methodology and work-plan for performing the assignment.
- (c) Project delivery plan.
- (d) Team composition and tasks assignment.
- (e) Detailed reference list indicating the scope and magnitude of similar assignments.
- (f) Relevant capacity assessments undertaken in the past Five (5) years

J. EVALUATION FACTORS & SUB FACTORS

The Proposal for this contract will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- (a) Methodological approach.
- (b) Clarity of the proposed Work plan.
- (c) Consultant's experience and capacity.
- (d) Years of experience in delivering similar assignments.

- (e) Familiarity with scope of work
- (f) Past performance
- (g) Quality of technical proposal.
- (h) Reasonableness of the proposed Budget.

K. REPORTING

The consultant will be supervised by the CAADP-XP4 Coordinator at CCARDESA and will also work very closely with his counterpart in ASARECA.