

# Effective emergency seed response & intervention: Workshop and dialogue



Event Communiqué  
December 2022

## Introduction

On Wednesday November 30th, 2022, over 40 seed sector stakeholders across government agencies, seed companies, development organizations, research and educational institutions gathered in Abuja to discuss effective seed interventions in emergency situations.

Emergencies compromise the resilience of the seed sector, prompting responders to rapidly deliver seed interventions. Effective interventions are those that are informed by an assessment and target population seed needs, while supporting the long-term development of the local seed system. The event, organized by the National Agricultural Seeds Council (NASC) and Sahel Consulting Agriculture and Nutrition Ltd., and hosted by Mercy Corps, was held at Bolton White Hotel in Abuja.

## Objectives

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Introduce seed sector stakeholders to the Seed Emergency Response Tool (SERT) developed by Mercy Corps and SeedSystem under the Integrated Seed Sector Development (ISSD) Africa action learning topic on Effective Seed Insecurity Response. The SERT includes guiding principles to help shape the actions of practitioners in the design of emergency seed security interventions.
- Facilitate discussions on the implications of the SERT for seed policy and the seed system in Nigeria

## Event Summary

Ms. Ifeoluwa Olorunnipa, Partnership Development Manager, Sahel Consulting opened the event with welcome remarks. Representing the Director General of NASC, the Director, Seed Coordination and Management Services, Mr. Ebiarede Zidafamor, delivered the first goodwill message, stressing the importance of effective seed emergency responses for the resilience of the seed system particularly in conflict-affected areas. He also expressed continuous support from NASC to partners working to enhance the development of the seed sector in Nigeria.

Ms. Margaret McLaughlin, Director of Programs, Mercy Corps Nigeria delivered the second goodwill message where she emphasized the need for an inclusive seed system, valued the contributions of partners and urged continued collaboration to strengthen the system. Engineer Abdullahi Abubakar, Director at the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) delivered the final goodwill message on behalf of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry in which he expressed the support of FMARD for the transformation of seed systems in Nigeria.

Mr. Wilfred Ouko, Program Advisor, Mercy Corps introduced the SERT, including the 10 guiding principles, to participants. The SERT is for policy makers, program managers, and field staff engaged in emergency and early recovery agricultural responses. It helps those new to this area of work, as well as those with experience, to make informed, quality decisions about the choice of a seed security intervention and how best to implement it. The SERT also recognizes and builds on existing and emerging seed assistance tools in the landscape.

### **SERT 10 Guiding Principles for Good Seed Aid (from the SERT)**

1. Do an assessment
2. Match the type of response to the the seed security problem(s)
3. Be clear about the intervention's goal
4. Confirm that the response type can actually be implemented in the given context
5. Ensure the intervention gets seed to farmers on time
6. Give priority to market-based assistance
7. Ensure crop and variety suitability
8. Verify seed quality to meet minimum standards of farmers, practitioners and donors
9. Offer farmers choice
10. Arrange for multiple types of feedback

*For more information and technical guidance on the principles, see the [SERT](#), pages 30-37.*

## Discussions on Challenges and Potential Solutions to Implementing the 10 Principles in Nigeria

The workshop included breakout sessions for discussions on the SERT's 10 guiding principles for good seed aid practice, including identification of challenges for their implementation in Nigeria and potential solutions, as well as strategies for socialization of the principles within the global community. Table 1 summarizes the practical challenges to program implementation in Nigeria that were noted by participants during group discussions about the different principles.

**Table 1: Challenges to program implementation in Nigeria that were highlighted in the group discussions about the different principles**

Principle	Challenges, as stated by participants	Potential solutions, as stated by participants
<p><b>Principle 1: Do an assessment</b> Where people are at risk of seed insecurity, assessments must be conducted to identify possible seed security problems among the diverse groups affected (e.g., men and women).</p>	<p>inaccessibility to access locations and obtain information due to natural disasters or high levels of insecurity; financial limitations for assessments; communication and logistics barriers; bureaucracy among responsible public sector agencies; poor knowledge of farmers and assessors on the difference between seed and grain.</p>	<p>availability and provision of logistics to support assessments; timeliness of assessments; and proper understanding of stakeholders on what constitutes seed</p>
<p><b>Principle 2: Match the type of response to the the seed security problem(s)</b> The type of response chosen should address the type of seed security problem(s) identified.</p>	<p>the multifaceted nature of insecurity issues given that multiple situations in conflict-ridden areas could pose difficulties in selecting a response; inadequate knowledge of socio-economic situations; and human bias</p>	<p>a pre-study/assessment of vulnerable zones, leveraging pre-immersion visits (such as through using the <a href="#">Context Analysis Tool</a>), to adequately determine potential response types</p>
<p><b>Principle 3: Be clear about the intervention's goal</b> The intervention should be designed to meet a clear goal.</p>	<p>not fully understanding the status of the farming system and ongoing crisis among farmers (e.g., not fully understanding the economic status, stability of cropping system, etc.)</p>	<p>the use of bio-fortified seed, diversification of seed among farmers, use of products resilient to climate change, and community advocacy, related to specific goals as identified such as nutrition and food security.</p>
<p><b>Principle 4: Confirm that the response type can actually be implemented in the given context</b> The type of response chosen must be able to be implemented in the given context and adhere to the 'do no harm' principle.</p>	<p>gender and social exclusion existing in the areas.</p>	<p>the use of home gardening, targeted towards females and their inclusion.</p>
<p><b>Principle 5: Ensure the intervention gets seed to farmers on time</b> Any intervention proposed must be able to be completed in time for farmers to have seed in hand for farmers' normal planting period. Late seed aid is simply bad seed aid.</p>	<p>inaccessible road networks; poor and inadequate extension services; and poor communication structures.</p>	<p>capacity building to enable local agents to serve as extension workers; the use of technology to ensure and hasten information flow across farmers, farmer groups and extension workers; and the use of the SERT as an extension tool.</p>
<p><b>Principle 6: Give priority to market-based assistance</b></p>	<p>inadequate farmgate sales points; poor market linkages for farmers; unenforced quality of seed across all seed producers; gender bias in seed</p>	<p>support for the affordability and availability of seed; increased access to seeds for farmers; strengthening of NASC to address seed</p>

Principle	Challenges, as stated by participants	Potential solutions, as stated by participants
Humanitarian assistance should support, not undermine, critical market functions.	marketing; price instability and fluctuation due to the interference of middlemen; and political issues.	adulteration; women and youth focused capacity building; marketing board by the government to foster awareness on average seed prices; and sensitization of farmers on seed quality and varieties.
<p><b>Principle 7: Ensure crop and variety suitability</b></p> <p>The crops and varieties selected for the intervention should suit the context and user needs; they should be adapted, usable under farmers' management conditions, tolerant of major stresses, and deemed acceptable by diverse groups of farmers, with attention given to female and male preferences.</p>	unavailability of complementary inputs and poor variety identification by farmers.	the use of local volunteers for education on crop varieties and continuous encouragement and adoption of new varieties
<p><b>Principle 8: Verify seed quality to meet minimum standards of farmers, practitioners and donors</b></p> <p>The quality of the seed involved in the intervention must meet the minimum standards of farming communities, practitioners, and donor organizations.</p>	an inadequate number of registered and reliable seed vendors; limited information on seed suppliers; and viability periods on seed pack labels.	capacity building of vendors and strengthening of partnerships with seed sector regulators.
<p><b>Principle 9: Offer farmers choice</b></p> <p>Where possible, farmers should be able to choose among crop and variety options.</p>	unavailability of local varieties known to farmers and poor knowledge on the adaptability and use of improved varieties.	sensitization on seed varieties, particularly with consideration for gender and encouragement of local community seed producers to produce and maintain local varieties.
<p><b>Principle 10: Arrange for multiple types of feedback</b></p> <p>Client groups, farmers, and suppliers must have the opportunity to give feedback at the end of the season, and afterwards.</p>	unknown feedback mechanisms and inaction on feedback provided.	the need for mechanisms tailored for obtaining feedback from each group.

## Policy Discussion

Key stakeholders in the seed sector also deliberated on the implications of the guiding principles for seed policy and the seed system in Nigeria. The stakeholders agreed on the timely nature of the workshop, given the recent development of a new seed policy which is currently awaiting adoption. Key takeaways from the discussion included:

- For the application of the SERT as a tool to guide program design, the consideration of different emergency contexts is critical, to ensure that interventions are well tailored to address issues.
- There is the need to reflect on the emergency seed response framework and incorporate the guiding principles in the implementation strategy for the new seed policy developed by NASC
- The importance of driving policy implementation, particularly the new seed policy, through detailed strategies and the involvement of seed sector partners across all sectors, to ensure implementation and ultimately impact.
- The need to encourage businesses to leverage on crisis to support the supply of seed in the system. Long-term seed aid is harmful to the seed sector, and it is important to include the private sector to ensure sustainability.
- A focus on monitoring and evaluation is critical to measure the impact of policies.

Following earlier discussions, which laid the groundwork for good practices for the implementation of seed security response and its implication for policy and the seed system, participants were introduced to a practical section of the SERT, the decision trees. The decision trees contain a series of questions to help practitioners decide whether a seed-related intervention should be done in the given context and, if so, which kind. Decision-making should always be guided by concrete evidence. Thus, the decision tree asks for clear evidence to support the movement along the decision trees and helps practitioners make concrete decisions.

The workshop ended with participants making commitments to complete the decision trees from their given context, to enable Mercy Corps to obtain feedback on the decision trees as it relates to the Nigerian context.

## Next Steps

As a follow up to the policy discussions, it is hoped that seed sector stakeholders in Nigeria will sustain conversations around the possibility of integrating elements of the SERT, particularly the 10 guiding principles of good seed aid, into the Nigerian seed policy implementation strategy.

## Resources

[Seed Emergency Response Tool](#) (SERT)

[Context Analysis Tool](#) (CAT)

## Contact

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