What do we already know?

*Best practice for emergency seed system assessments & design*

Abby Love
Agriculture Systems Technical Support Unit, Mercy Corps
Effective seed insecurity response

Action learning questions

● How can we improve the impact of emergency seed interventions?

● How can emergency interventions help create more resilient and improved seed systems in the long-term?

Aim

● To support humanitarian actors with clear guidance and principles on how to implement efficient and effective emergency seed responses.
Development: Mercy Corps & ISSD Africa with SeedSystem, input from USAID and implementers. Builds on 30 years of lessons learned.

Audience: policy makers, program managers and field staff engaged in emergency and early recovery agricultural response; non-technical staff and experienced professionals.

Aim: provide guidance on seed security interventions: assessing possible need; setting goals; choosing among responses; designing specific field action; evaluating.

English and French

Complimented by the Context Analysis Tool (CAT)
SERT Central Features

1. Seed systems fundamentals
2. Charts on seed response types
3. Decision trees to select specific actions
4. 10 principles for good seed aid practice
5. Resources
## Decision Trees

### Table 7 Decision Trees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key questions to shape the response</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>If YES</th>
<th>If NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **A1 Readiness**
Is the farming population ready to engage in agriculture? | ![Evidence](1234) | Move to A2 ▼ | Are there other crucial non-agricultural aid options to support the population? |
| **A2 Means**
Does the population have the means to engage in agriculture (e.g., land, labor, other inputs, credit)? | ![Evidence](1234) | Move to A3 ▼ | Can supplementary aid help lessen non-seed constraints? If yes, what kind of supplementary aid? If no, should non-seed aid be given priority? |
| **A3 Broad context**
Are the major context changes affecting agriculture during this stress period clearly understood? | ![Evidence](1234) | Move to A4 ▼ | What additional information processes could be put in place to clarify the situation? |
| **A4 Do-no-harm: general context**
Can a humanitarian response be implemented in the current scenario? Consider short- and long-term effects. | ![Evidence](1234) | Move to section B ▼ | Can harmful effects be alleviated with altered strategy? Analyze each item in terms of potential harm. If no, consider other non-seed aid. |
## Decision Trees

### C2 responses linked to Seed Access: key programming questions

For the constraint of **Seed Access**, there are several possible response options. It is up to the implementing organization to choose among response types.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key questions</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Cash</th>
<th>Vouchers</th>
<th>SVF</th>
<th>DSD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C2.1 Context</td>
<td>Does the context allow for this type of intervention?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there sufficient market outlets supplying formal or informal seed?</td>
<td>Are there sufficient market outlets supplying formal or informal seed?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are outlets within reasonable distance?</td>
<td>Are outlets within reasonable distance to recipients?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it safe/feasible for recipients to travel?</td>
<td>Is it safe/feasible for recipients to travel?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do donors/gov’ts allow for this modality?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YES</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO</strong></td>
<td><strong>YES</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO</strong></td>
<td><strong>YES</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review possibility of other interventions that enable seed access and solve constraint(s)</td>
<td>Review safer/more accessible response options (DSD?)</td>
<td>Review whether DSD can offer</td>
<td>Review whether DSD can offer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guiding Principles

Themes

1. Seed System Security Assessment (SSSA)
2. Response type
3. Goal of the intervention
4. Context
5. Timeliness
6. Market-based assistance
7. Crop and variety choice
8. Seed quality
9. Farmers’ choice
10. Feedback at multiple key stages
SERT Central Features

#7 Crop & Variety Choice

The crops and varieties selected for the intervention should suit the context and user needs

Technical notes
a) Seed and intervention goal
b) Traditional versus modern varieties
c) Varietal preferences, including those related to gender
d) Crop preferences, including those related to gender
e) Realistic management conditions
f) Self- and open-pollinated varieties
g) Genetically modified organisms (GMOs)
h) No suitability, no intervention
Guiding Principles

Themes

1. **Seed System Security Assessment (SSSA)**
2. Response type
3. Goal of the intervention
4. Context
5. Timeliness
6. Market-based assistance
7. Crop and variety choice
8. Seed quality
9. Farmers’ choice
10. Feedback at multiple key stages

SERT Central Features

- Gender
SCALE Consultations on Seed Systems Assessments
March 2021

• **With whom**: HQ technical advisors & program implementers of BHA-funded programs

• **Aim**: better understand the variation in uptake and usage of Seed System Assessments in BHA-funded programming
Key Challenges with SSSAs in Emergencies

- Applications fail to include an SSSA or equivalent seed assessment.
- Applications show an inaccurate understanding of SSSA purpose.
- Central repository of SSSAs not widely accessed by implementers.
- Challenge with multi-agency coordination for assessments.
- Limited expertise/capacity of staff in understanding the purpose of the tools/methods for an SSSA.
- Potential strain on IP resources to conduct SSSA.
- Difficulties assessing informal seed market systems; program bias toward formal market activities.
- Limited awareness and/or availability of data analysis tools, resources, and research.
Work to fill these gaps

- SCALE Seeds Learning Group
- SERT & CAT tools
- ISSD Africa Phase 2 – humanitarian seed responses
- PRO-WASH & SCALE – seed focus
- Updated BHA emergency guidance
- ... and more!
Conflict-affected areas
Seed Systems in Conflict-affected Areas

Context Analysis Tool (CAT)

Development: Mercy Corps & SeedSystem, and input from USAID and implementers (12 reviewers from 9 organizations)

Audience: implementers working in conflict-affected areas of fragile states.

Aim: help actors quickly grasp the environment and circumstances in which seed systems function, and then to identify practical entry points for designing and implementing interventions to bolster such systems, making them more resilient.

English and French

Complimented by the Seed Emergency Response Tool (SERT)
How could a RTB lens be overlaid on these principles, the SERT or the CAT?