

FINAL REPORT

Gorta-Self Help Africa Strategic Plan and Programme Evaluation 2011-2015

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Executive Summary

International Solutions Group is undertaking an evaluation of Gorta-Self Help Africa's (GSHA) 2011-2015 strategic plans and programmes. GSHA is an Irish NGO that has operated in Sub-Saharan Africa for 30 years, and has concentrated its work on improving livelihoods of smallholder farmers. Through its system of well-established country offices, GSHA has established itself as a leader in integrated rural development projects, establishment of rural credit facilities, development of cooperatives, and introducing training and technology to increase agricultural productivity. More recently, it has been developing projects in the areas of resilience, climate smart agriculture, nutrition, and value chain development.

The evaluation methodology will include a desk review of relevant programme documentation, and analysis of programme and organisational performance data. Primary research will be conducted through in person and on-line interviews with GSHA staff in headquarters and country offices. In addition, primary field research was conducted in Ethiopia and Malawi. Qualitative methods used include focus group discussions (FGD), key informant interviews (KII), direct observation in the field, and desk review (DR). Quantitative methods include a desk review and analysis of results frameworks and their progress in meeting programme goals, which will be supported by field based observations. Primary research took place in June and July of 2015, and covered all 5 GSHA country offices and one regional office, plus headquarters in Dublin and the UK.

The ISG team analysed the program strategy and field implementation for relevance regarding how GSHA's strategy is meeting its objectives regarding beneficiaries, and policies of partners and donors. It is clear that GSHA is fully relevant, and the bulk of the report gives many examples in the sections on effectiveness, impact, and sustainability that prove the point. Relevance in the local context is greatly strengthened by the long-term presence of country offices that ensure GSHA strategies are implemented within the local context. GSHA sought further analysis on relevance in terms of programme logic, adaptability, and coherence. The discussion on relevance indicated that GSHA's programmes are following the logic presented in the GSHA Programme Strategy, and demonstrating adaptability to changing conditions and emergence of new themes in development. In terms of programme coherence, the great majority of programmes adhere to overall strategic objectives.

In terms of effectiveness, GSHA programmes are universally achieving programme goals qualitatively, and for the most part quantitatively due to weather related anomalies, which are unavoidable. The GSHA strategy has been effectively implemented in programme countries, as country level results frameworks. GSHA's funding strategy has been effective and coherent in delivering programmes, and programmes are well integrated into country level strategies. Implementation of projects under SO1 was fully effective. A key strength identified supporting programme effectiveness was GSHA's development of strong relationships with local and national governments. A potential weakness is in the reliance on local partners for implementation, as how well the partner performs in implementation has a direct impact on GSHA's ability to meet program objectives. Effectiveness is also enhanced by

GSHA's rigorous monitoring and evaluation regime, which provides GSHA management a clear picture of how projects are achieving their goals, while addressing the demands of donors.

The effectiveness of cross cutting issues was also reviewed. Regarding climate change, GSHA has been very effective developing climate smart activities (agronomic practices, increased crop diversification, introduction of drought resistant varieties, introducing low-carbon technologies), and also incorporating concepts of conserving the natural resource base (soil quality, irrigation). GSHA has effectively integrated nutrition related activities, but not consistently over all programmes, which is due in part to not being included in the goals of some specific programmes. Gender and youth are also not consistently included in programme design, but all monitoring activities disaggregate participants by gender. Although an overall strategic objective (SO2), policy has been effectively promoted in several programme countries when it is building upon GSHA's considerable technological and implementation achievements, such as in seed laws in Ethiopia, forest management laws in Zambia, and aquaculture laws in Uganda. Influencing policy in international arenas has been more mixed in its effectiveness, and GSHA needs to consider the level of resources it wants to devote to policy development and advocacy to increase its impact.

The efficiency of GSHA's activities was evaluated in terms of sufficiency of resources, having adequate systems in place, and suitability of partnerships. The key resource GSHA has is its staff that has an exceptional level of professionalism and dedication. Even with an excellent staff, GSHA is efficient in salary levels (average in local markets) with all staff fully occupied. GSHA is also efficient with devoting resources to operational expenses, and in some cases possibly too efficient. GSHA also promotes efficiency by maintaining strong systems in planning, policy, and procedures. Finally, GSHA promotes efficiency through its selection of implementing partners, some with long relationships with GSHA, and also by developing strong relationships with local government officials. However, to promote the efficiency of partnerships further, a partnership policy may be useful.

GSHA is achieving high levels of impact throughout its programming. A thorough review of results frameworks (RBF) indicates goals are being met, and through selected IHM surveys, actual impact is being demonstrated. GSHA has also been successful in scaling up projects by delivering quality services to beneficiaries, which is proven by many of GSHA's programmes being replicated by others. Variation in impact between GSHA country offices was also evaluated, and was found to be fairly uniform. In addition, innovative approaches in one office were being shared with other GSHA country offices to increase impact across GSHA's country programmes.

Sustainability was evaluated in terms of the likelihood of project impacts being sustainable, and the factors contributing to sustainability. It was determined that GSHA programmes have a high level of sustainability, with the exception of some short-duration programmes, which may not be able to cement the learning of farmers in a single growing season. Longer term engagements to develop cooperatives and agribusinesses, and savings and credit groups have a high degree of sustainability, and in some cases GSHA supported projects are witnessing high levels of growth in the last year of the programme. Capacity building and farmer training activities also exhibit a high degree of sustainability when conducted as part of a multi-year project.

The ISG team also evaluated whether GSHA is meeting its strategic objectives as outlined in its SHA Programme Strategy 2011-2015. GSHA has been fully successful in meeting the first strategic objective (SO1), which seeks to enable smallholders to achieve viable livelihoods from the intensification and

diversification of agriculture and greater integration into the markets. SO1 also accounts for the vast majority of programmes and funding within GSHA. Qualitative field research indicated that all beneficiaries were very satisfied with GSHA projects, and had no comments on what GSHA could do better. Nearly all projects fit neatly into SO1, and projects were delivering assistance and services to smallholders as designed. Quantitatively, an analysis of recent country-level year end reports and results frameworks indicate that GSHA is on track to meet its goals.

The second strategic objective (SO2) seeks to influence others to enable smallholder farmers in Africa to prosper. In this policy and advocacy oriented strategic objective, GSHA has been partially successful in meeting its goals. GSHA has been most successful in SO2 in working with governments to develop and adopt new legislation that is based on GSHA's successes in the field, with a key example being the new seed law in Ethiopia. It is less clear that significant impact has resulted from other participatory or advisory roles on various country and international fora.

In the final strategic objective (SO3), the ISG team evaluated whether GSHA remains fit for purpose, and it was determined that GSHA has been fully successful in this regard. The evaluation team analysed how GSHA performed in terms of providing strategic oversight (to country offices), financial resources, capacity and performance of staff, and improved systems for M&E, HR, and finance.

ISG was also requested to analyse the impact of the July 2014 merger between Gorta and Self Help Africa across the organisation (HQ, country offices). The impact varied, in particular whether a country office had a Gorta organisation there previously, or not. Opinions at headquarters varied from the merger went seamlessly and was completed last year, to some that thought the merger was ongoing, and the final results of the merger were still not completed. However, it appears that operational systems have been fully merged, and the level of funding reserves has risen greatly.

Finally, the ISG evaluation team provided a set of recommendations to assist with current and future operations. The first recommendation involved managing growth, as it appears that there may be many new opportunities coming on line in the near future, and current staff and operational capacity does not appear sufficient to accommodate much growth. Recommendations on managing growth included expanding HQ-country office coordination, rationalizing fundraising, and bolstering financial procedures. A second recommendation involves creating a partnership policy for use by country offices in better managing relationships, in particular with implementing partners. A third recommendation introduces the concept of a communications strategy, and the creation of a position at the country office level to assist with outreach, advocacy, policy development, and proposal development. Finally, the ISG team provided some suggestions for the next strategy starting in 2016.

Introduction

International Solutions Group has undertaken an evaluation of Gorta-Self Help Africa's (Gorta SHA, or GSHA) 2011-2015 strategic plans and programmes. GSHA is an Irish NGO that has operated in Sub-Saharan Africa for 30 years, and has concentrated its work on improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers. Through its system of well-established country offices, GSHA has established itself as a leader in integrated rural development projects, establishment of rural credit facilities, development of cooperatives, and introducing training and technology to increase agricultural productivity. More recently, it has been developing projects in the areas of resilience, climate smart agriculture, nutrition, value chain development, and agribusiness.

The overall purpose of the evaluation is to assess GSHA's progress towards its strategic and programme targets, results, and objectives. More specifically, the evaluation provides an independent analysis of progress towards meeting the three strategic objectives in the Self Help Africa Strategic Plan 2011-2015:

- SO1 – To enable smallholders to achieve viable livelihoods from intensification and diversification of agriculture and greater integration into markets;
- SO2 – Influence others to enable smallholder farmers in Africa to prosper; and
- SO3 – Continue to be fit for purpose.

In addition, the evaluation aims to contribute towards GSHA's accountability towards its stakeholders, including donors, partners and beneficiaries. Part of this accountability is to provide an evaluation of Irish Aid's Programme Funding Grant (IAPF) in achieving programme outcomes and impact, since the IAPF is a major source of funding for GSHA. Another aspect evaluated is the impact of the July 2014 merger between Gorta and Self Help Africa, and also to provide suggestions to inform a follow-on strategic plan for the newly merged organisation after 2015. For a complete list of questions to be addressed by the evaluation from the GSHA terms of reference, please see **Annex 1**. In addition, **Annex 1** will include the analytical framework that ordered the questions from the TOR into the DAC format as requested.

Methodology

ISG sought to assess the achievement of defined programme outcomes at the field and global levels. The research team employed a robust approach based on transparency, participation and consultation. The evaluation was underpinned by:

- A desk review of relevant GSHA programme documents including the GSHA 2011-2015 Strategic Plan, the GSHA post merger interim strategy, individual country strategic plans, results-based frameworks, M&E data, annual country and donor reports, policy/procedure documents and other internal & external documentation. A complete list of documents considered for this final report is attached at **Annex 2**.
- Assessment of organisational and programme performance through field visits to Ethiopia and Malawi. Document reviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and direct observation with beneficiaries were conducted in each country;
- In-person and remote (i.e. via Skype/telephone) key informant interviews with stakeholders in GSHA HQ (Dublin and the UK) and the additional programme countries of Uganda, Zambia, Kenya, Burkina Faso and also with representatives of the West Africa region to assess performance at global level.

Research was implemented with a focus on the relevance and effectiveness (design of plans and programmes), the efficiency (process) and the impact and sustainability (results level). In particular, ISG analysed the relevance of programme's conceptualisation; assessed the efficiency of the administration and management of the programmes across outcomes – including GSHA's ability to record evidence of impact and lessons learnt; assessed the effectiveness and immediate impact of the GSHA's programming based on the results achieved against those planned and identified and, assessed unanticipated results or unintended consequences. The data thus generated was analysed to provide findings and recommendations that can be used to inform and strengthen future programming while allowing for the sharing of best practices and the refining of conceptual and programmatic aspects.

Overview of the Evaluation Process

The evaluation consisted of five phases:

- 1) **Preparation Phase** (May 2015 – June 2015) - This phase elaborated on the approach and methodology for the evaluation. A Document Review was conducted to inform the evaluation framework, develop the evaluation questions and detail the approach and methodology. An Inception Report (IR) was drafted and delivered to GSHA by ISG.
- 2) **Data Collection and Fieldwork** phase (June-July 2015) - This phase included field visits to the two programme countries and involved close liaison with the GSHA Country Office teams in each country in preparation for the visits. In-country, the evaluators conducted consultations with key informants at country level and undertook further literature and document reviews.
- 3) **Analysis and Preparation of Evaluation Report** (August-September 2015) - This phase focused on identifying evaluation findings, synthesising and developing recommendations and on formulating conclusions.

Evaluation Design

Methods and Tools used for Data Collection

Document Review

A detailed document review was undertaken, guided by the agreed evaluation questions that facilitated conceptualisation of the methodology for the research. For a full list of documents reviewed at both global and country level see **Annex 2**.

Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

Approximately 86 interlocutors/stakeholders (or groups of stakeholders) were consulted as part of the evaluation through semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and direct observations of beneficiaries in their communities.

Research target	Number	Tool
GSHA headquarters staff	6	KII (in-person and remotely)
Country programme managers	6	KII (remote) Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Burkina Faso
GSHA staff	20	KII (in-person) Malawi & Ethiopia
Partner organisations	7	KII (in-person) Malawi & Ethiopia
Programme beneficiaries	16	KII (in-person) Malawi & Ethiopia
Programme beneficiaries	10 (groups)	FGD/Group interviews Malawi & Ethiopia
Government officials	6	KII (in-person) Malawi & Ethiopia
Government officials	1	FGD/Group interview Ethiopia
GSHA country programme staff	2	FGD/Group interviews Malawi & Ethiopia
Donor representatives	3	KII (in-person) Malawi & Ethiopia
GSHA programmes/projects	9	Direct observation

Respondents to the FGDs and KIIs were selected using a convenience sampling methodology that was utilised due to limited resources that precluded a true random sampling. The sampling frame for the evaluation consisted of two groupings:

- 1) Programme beneficiaries: individuals (women and/or men) representing communities and organisations participating in programme activities. The interlocutors who responded to the evaluation were selected by the GSHA Country Offices. The COs also facilitated the selection of programme communities to provide a representative sample of the diversity of activities, locations, dynamics and results;
- 2) Programme organisational/government stakeholders: representatives of partner organisations and government departments involved with GSHA. Individuals were selected on the basis of their relevance to GSHA's programming and their availability to be interviewed by ISG (availability of all key stakeholders could not be assumed as a given due to the time constraints of the evaluation). A full list of respondents is included at **Annex 3**.

The limitations on the findings imposed by the sampling were counterbalanced by triangulation of field research findings with each other, with data gathered through virtual interviews and with the findings of the literature/document review. A list of research limitations is included at **Annex 4**.

Country Visits

The evaluation field visits consisted of 8-10 day visits to each country. Upon arrival the evaluation team member held an introductory meeting with the GSHA country office for a briefing on the country context, programme activities, programme results, logistics and field visit schedules.

The evaluator conducted the in-country field visits in close partnership with GSHA country office staff. Detailed notes taken during each KII or FGD as well as from direct observation that were written up each day. For a summation of field observations, please see **Annex 7**. Analysis of these notes enabled triangulation of data from the mixed methods with the data from the document review. Individual country briefs containing preliminary findings and recommendations were presented to each GSHA country office prior to the departure of the evaluator, with a brief written summary of findings presented shortly after departure. This allowed opportunities for discussion, feedback and clarifications, highlighting gaps, potential misperceptions and to ensure buy-in and ownership.

Methods and Tools Used for Data Analysis

The following methods of analysis were used in this evaluation:

Descriptive analysis was used to understand the context in which GSHA's programmes evolved and to describe its implementation;

Content analysis of programme documents, records of interviews, observations from the field, etc. and qualitative data emerging from GSHA's programmes field work to identify common trends, themes, and patterns for each of the key evaluation criteria.

Comparative analysis to examine findings across different countries, themes, or other criteria. It was also used to identify best practices, innovative approaches and lessons learnt. This analysis was supplemented by the data from stakeholder virtual interviews.

Triangulation between data collection methods increased the quality and credibility of the evaluation findings and conclusions.

Quality Assurance of deliverables was ensured through the following:

Clarity: During the inception phase, GSHA and stakeholder needs and expectations were clarified. Data collection tools were developed from the evaluation framework. These tools were reviewed by, and discussed with GSHA evaluation coordinators to ensure appropriateness.

Communication: The evaluation team met regularly to review progress on the assignment and communicated frequently with GSHA on work completed, next steps, as well as any areas of concern and important events affecting the evaluation. The team critiqued all drafts and products and sought input from other in-house experts as required.

Timing: The timeline for the evaluation allowed for review and revisions of all draft deliverables and ensured feedback could be incorporated into the reports.

Global Standards: ISG ensures that its work complies with standards set by UNEG and professional associations, such as ALNAP.

Findings

The findings of the report will be structured to follow DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, with a section focusing on each criteria. Analysis of the main evaluation questions included in the original terms of reference for the evaluation will be presented throughout the findings of the five major evaluation criteria. Following the main findings per the above criteria, will be conclusions and recommendations, with additional coverage on suggestions for the follow on programme strategy. In addition, observations on the recent Gorta and Self Help Africa merger will also be included to address specific evaluation questions in the TOR not covered in the preceding sections. The conclusions are also provided in relation to the three primary strategic objectives of the SHA programme strategy covering 2011-2015.

I. Relevance

The ISG team analysed the program strategy and field implementation for relevance regarding how GSHA's strategy is meeting its objectives regarding beneficiaries, and policies of partners and donors. It is clear that GSHA is fully relevant, and the bulk of the report gives many examples in the sections on effectiveness, impact, and sustainability that prove the point. Relevance in the local context is greatly strengthened by the long-term presence of country offices that ensure GSHA strategies are implemented within the local context. This strong local presence not only ensures programme implementation that satisfies the needs of beneficiaries, but also allows GSHA to have meaningful impact on local and national policies, which will have an impact beyond the actual set of direct beneficiaries to all small holder farmers in the country. GSHA sought further analysis on relevance in terms of programme logic, adaptability, and coherence, which are discussed further here.

I.1 Logic – The Post Merger Interim Programme Strategy is a cohesive document that is consistent with the previous Self Help Africa Strategic Plan 2011-2015. Both strategies maintain emphasis on working with the “able poor” to the “economically developing poor.” Targets remain smallholder farmers and increasing incomes through the increasing of productivity and diversity of crops, and supporting the expansion of cash crops. Increases in productivity and diversity will also have an impact on improving nutrition levels through greater availability, which is augmented by targeted training to improve household nutrition practices.

However, the underpinning theme of the strategy - fundamentally economic growth – has been expanded to include a number of increasingly important sectors and sub-goals such as conservation of natural resources, improving nutrition, developing enterprises (agribusinesses), ameliorating the negative impacts of climate change and resilience. Each of these sub-goals could, in themselves, constitute standalone programmes, and incorporate GSHA's well-developed implementation strategies of cooperative development, farmer training, assistance with inputs and infrastructure, and rural savings and credit development. This is an appropriate combination of established strengths and contemporary development concerns and should be carefully and explicitly integrated into future strategic development efforts in order to highlight:

- a. how the established strengths of GSHA are very germane to some of the key existing and emerging challenges facing developing countries, and

- b. how GSHA is adapting its approach to not just the emerging challenges, but also the changing circumstances in programme countries – new technologies, new markets, new ways of doing business as countries progress along the development spectrum.

I.2 Adaptability – The landscape of international development is changing rapidly, with new areas of emphasis by donors, and new concepts related to the prevailing paradigms (e.g. the post 2015 development agenda). In particular, programmes are being developed around the concept of resilience, which combines traditional livelihoods and food security activities with disaster preparedness and adaptation to climate change. GSHA has been adept at adjusting to the concept of resilience, as can be exemplified by the DISCOVER programme in Malawi. This programme relies on GSHA's long standing expertise in implementing projects that improve rural livelihoods, while adding disaster preparedness and response, introduction of low carbon technologies, and climate-smart agriculture. Interviews with donors in Malawi highlighted that GSHA is already considered to be a leader in resilience and climate-smart agriculture, an excellent example of GSHA's adaptability to new concepts that have only been gradually put into practice in the last decade. GSHA is also seeking to engage in innovative technologies for agricultural development, such as mAgri initiatives that link mobile telephones with agricultural services.¹

I.3 Coherence – The great majority of GSHA's programming activities are coherent with the GSHA programme strategy. In practice, most programmes/projects are in line with the goal of improving farm livelihoods, nutritional status and reducing hunger. However, individual exceptions or inconsistencies were noted by the evaluation team, with some programmes addressing non-core targets, such as the STAR programme in Ethiopia which works with the most vulnerable, and non-core technologies, such as the WASH programme in Burkina Faso. However, it has been argued that WASH in dryland areas is critical to providing water for other GSHA activities such as home gardens, and should be included under GSHAs strategies to improve livelihoods through agriculture. While these programmes are popular and well implemented, they risk confusing the identity of GSHA, and also require technical inputs, in the case of WASH, that GSHA may not be able to fully support. A potential strategy to mitigate 'scope creep' of programmes is to establish partnerships with other organisations (national or international) with complementary capacities in these areas to bolster GSHA's core competencies.

¹ GSHA is also implementing an m-Nutrition initiative in partnership with Oxfam in Malawi

II. Effectiveness

The ISG evaluation team analysed the effectiveness of programmes via GSHA's own performance monitoring systems, the evaluation team's field visits and remote data collection. In summary, the evaluation team concludes that GSHA's programmes are meeting their objectives. This is a strong achievement given the substantial structural changes that GSHA has undergone over the period under evaluation.

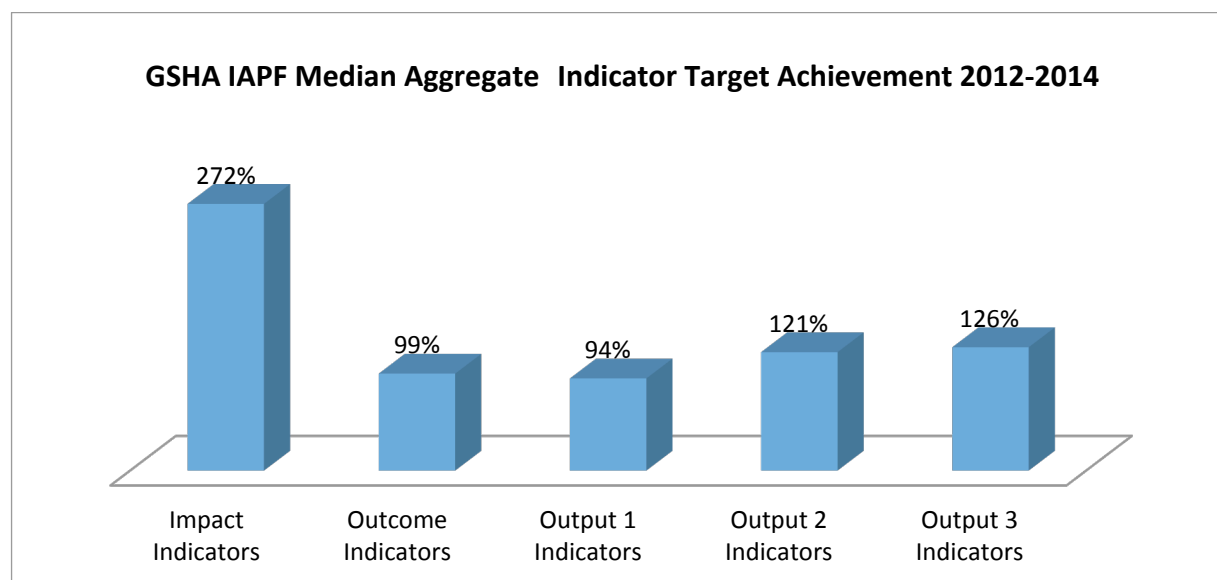
II.1 Strategy – GSHA's implementation of programme strategies in the five IAPF and other programme countries has largely been, and continues to be, successful. The primary factors that have contributed to the successful implementation of country-level strategies are as follows:

- The development of the current strategies building on years of implementation in the field, and extensive country-level experience, that facilitates programme management and gives GSHA a strong profile in Ireland and in programme countries;
- Strong technical skills among programme staff in specific areas of expertise. The current strategy emphasises a number of related sectoral areas (nutrition, gender), and brings from Gorta a good awareness of natural resources management (NRM);
- An eagerness to adopt and adapt to emerging and innovative organisational growth areas, such as the intersection of public and private sectors in agriculture, and new agricultural and communications technologies;
- A smooth transition with respect to the merger between Gorta and SHA that not only did not interfere substantially with the implementation of programme activities, but generated important organisational strength during a period of major instability in the global economy;
- A good mix of restricted (institutional donor-provided) and unrestricted funding that has been bolstered by the merger;
- Well-implemented and managed partnerships at all levels in programme countries that are not necessarily restricted to formal programme funding cycles;
- Very robust administrative/managerial systems managed by highly skilled staff that facilitate efficiency, transparency, accountability and effectiveness and that have become embedded in the merged organisations.

II.1.a Evidence – A comprehensive review of country-level IAPF results frameworks indicates that all country programmes are on track to meet their stated goals as of the end of 2014. Triangulation via the evaluation field research indicates that this remains the case into 2015.

The graph, below, indicates the median levels of achievement for aggregated impact, outcome and output indicators across all IAPF programme countries. While some very high-scoring countries and on specific indicators have skewed the results, somewhat, it provides a strong picture of achievement of the IAPF to 2014. The evaluators noted that the majority of the programme achievements as captured by the RBF indicators took place in 2013-2014, reflective of typical programme dynamics, and it is likely that further gains will be seen for 2014-2015.

More detailed analysis of individual programme objectives and countries are provided in **Annex 5**.



Beneficiaries interviewed as part of the evaluation expressed universal satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of GSHA activities. Any suggestions that beneficiaries made to the evaluation with respect to the programme were related to additional activities outside the original scope of the project/programme, were high cost and/or complexity (e.g. a request for dairy cows in Malawi) and therefore not feasible. An exception was the very popular small animal pass-on project in Malawi's DISCOVER programme that had already depleted its budget and fully implemented the activity. Respondents enthusiastically wanted it to continue.

II.1.b Coherence – GSHA's funding strategy, which is largely based on attracting donor funding for specific programmes, has been effective and coherent with respect to GSHA's overall programmatic strategy. This is supported by GSHA's strong financial management and results measurement systems, which have been significantly strengthened over the last several years. The programmes are mostly consistent with the strategy, and at the field level the evaluation team noted little difference between programme funded activities and unrestricted/strategic funding from the IAPF grants or other unrestricted sources. In addition, GSHA has a goal of expanding its institutional donor base, as was observed by the evaluation team in Ethiopia. With the LMD programme in Ethiopia, GSHA has adapted to the funding mechanism of being a sub-contractor to a large US NGO under a USAID contract. Challenges included adapting to approval and payment of GSHA invoices, which takes a long time and is unpredictable, while GSHA has obligations to pay its implementing partners. A further challenge is preparation of detailed progress reports, a precursor to getting the invoice approved, and this process can require several drafts, and is reviewed by USAID before payment can be made. This process is more detailed and uncertain (with respect to financial disbursements) than has been GSHA's experience with other donors, highlighting the need to continue to be prepared for the detailed and bureaucratic procedures that accompany some institutional donor funding. Ethiopia also provided another good example of programme and funding coherence to the evaluation team in their visits to the Meki Batu, Raya Wakena, and Edget Seed cooperatives – to talk with beneficiaries in the SMART programme that ended in December 2014. GSHA staff are still providing advisory support (with unrestricted funding) to the cooperatives as GSHA positions itself for new funding opportunities to once again be able to provide programmatic support to these cooperatives and others formerly under the

SMART programme. When a potential future donor funding stream has been identified, this is a strategically astute use of unrestricted funding to minimise loss of programme momentum.

II.1.c Integration – The integration of programmes into the overall GSHA strategy has been effective given that the majority of projects support the goals of GSHA. This is again due to the fact that the SHA strategy of 2011-2015 was developed using field level experience and expertise, and not imposed on the field externally. Only the second Strategic Objective on policy initiatives to improve the enabling environment is less well integrated, as strategy-led policy initiatives developed by HQ have not been fully supported at the country level, and have not been adequately funded. This has led to a lower level of integration between country and HQ strategies. The evaluation team notes, however, that GSHA is currently developing its policy strategy (including individual country assessments and a robust results framework). The evaluators recommend maintaining momentum in this regard, particularly with respect to participation of country-level staff and stakeholders.

II.2 Implementation The lead evaluator assessed nine separate projects through field visits in two countries, of which all were determined to be effective in implementation of their activities a conclusion supported by programme reports and performance measurements. One example from each of the three strategic objectives in the Self Help Africa Programme Strategy 2011-2015 is provided to illustrate the specifics of achievement for each SO.

Strategic Objective 1 - To enable smallholders to achieve viable livelihoods from intensification and diversification of agriculture and greater integration into markets.

For SO1, an example of successful implementation was noted in Ethiopia with the Raya Kachawa Farmers Cooperative Union (FCU) in Kofele, which is receiving assistance from GSHA through the Irish Aid-funded Malt Barley Production and Market Linkages Project. Since GSHA's partnership with Raya Kachawa FCU began in 2012, the number of primary cooperatives has grown from 27 to 36, and smallholder members have increased from 6,120 to 10,325. GSHA has led the effort to introduce and expand a seed multiplication activity for improved malt barley varieties that are in high demand from national brewers.² In addition to GSHA's active programme of training farmers, lead farmers, and local government extension agents in seed multiplication, GSHA has also played a pivotal role in assisting the FCU with expanding market linkages. For instance, the GSHA Country Director is assisting the FCU in its partnership with Heineken to establish long-term technical and marketing partnerships, which could greatly boost private sector investment into the FCU. Similar agreements have been put in place between Diageo and other farmer cooperatives supported by GSHA.

Finally, to assess the impact of the Raya Kachawa FCU's activities on community members, the evaluation team held focus group discussions with five members of a primary cooperative in Kofele that is a member of the FCU. This primary cooperative has 399 members of which 101 are women, and they expressed significant satisfaction with the support they have received from the FCU, including supplying improved varieties of malt barley seeds for planting (not for seed production purposes), providing

² The brewing industry was privatised in 2014, and major international drinks companies (Heineken, Diageo) have been quick to access markets. Ethiopia has also removed barriers to imported malt barley, with imports already starting, in competition to domestic malt barley production. Hence, it is a very challenging and potentially opportune time for malt barley smallholders, and farmer groups such as the Raya Kachawa FCU.

vegetable seeds, fertiliser, and training. When asked what crop they would like to expand, the woman manager of the primary cooperative and the four farmers present all agreed that malt barley would be their first choice, followed by cabbage.

While all nine projects in two countries that were visited by the evaluation team demonstrated effective implementation under SO1, this particular project – Malt Barley Production and Market Linkages Project – exemplifies the comprehensive approach GSHA takes which is born out of strong partnerships. It also exemplifies a true value chain approach, with significant farmer training, capacity building of the trainers, provision of credit, storage technology, market linkages, and possibly a long term marketing agreement with a major brewer.

Strategic Objective 2 - To influence others to enable smallholder farmers in Africa to prosper.

For SO2, one of the most important successes in influencing the enabling environment is GSHA's support to the development of the 2013 Seed Law in Ethiopia. The evaluation team visited the Director of the seed division of the Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA), which facilitated the creation of the Seed Law, and are now involved in developing a strategy to implement the law. The Director explained that the Seed Law covers three sectors in the seed production area: 1) Farmer to Farmer; 2) Farmer Seed Producers; and 3) Formal Sector (in actuality, the government sector), and that GSHA had provided the example for the Farmer Seed Producers, through its work under the CHAMP programme with the Edget Farmer's Union Seed Cooperative. Traditionally, the government has only supported the formal sector, which only produces 35% of the improved seeds available, but now they are looking to boost seed production through Farmer Seed Producers, as pioneered by GSHA, to meet growing demand. To that end, ATA has partnered with GSHA, and funded GSHA's Community Based Seed Production project in Halaba, and ATA will be seeking to pilot this model in other areas around Ethiopia. Therefore, this is an excellent example of effective implementation in SO2 strategic outcome indicator of scaling up proven models of good practice.

Strategic Objective 3 – Strengthen GSHA to ensure we are fit for purpose.

For SO3, GSHA has been effectively implementing new policies and procedures (e.g. Salesforce, PS Financials) to ensure that GSHA remains fit for purpose. In discussions with HQ staff, there have been numerous improvements to management systems, including MIS, finance, management, and programme performance. A new HR system is in place as of 2014 with the addition of a senior HR manager, and an HR assistant. HR staff has also conducted an extensive review of all policies, handbooks, salary scales, and country office policies. It should also be noted that the recent merger between Gorta and Self Help Africa was a time consuming endeavour, but the management side rebounded quickly as weaker management systems in Gorta were quickly bolstered with new and more robust systems from SHA. In general, the new, merged GSHA is not a static organisation, and is continuing to implement improvements to its management systems, and to strategies and procedures that guide programming activities to ensure that it remains fit for purpose in an effective manner. In addition, the merger has resulted in additional training and learning exchanges, including M&E workshops, head of programme meetings, and country director conferences, which all support GSHA's continuing effort to be fit for purpose.

From a senior strategic perspective, the merger of Gorta and SHA (and indeed the merger of SHA with a number of other organisations over the last number of years) has resulted in flux among the governing board(s) of the merged entities, in terms of numbers, incumbents, roles and responsibilities. However, these changes have not substantially affected the development or implementation of programmes and the merged organisation's systems. The current board structure contains a strong mix of skilled directors highly experienced in the theory and practice of international development drawn from politics (including a former Minister for Overseas Development), academia and the private sector.

II.3 Strengths and Weaknesses

Potential weakness - As mentioned above, relying on partners requires a different level of engagement than direct implementation. Feedback from country offices to the evaluation team highlighted that dealing with partners is one of the most significant challenges with respect to managing GSHA country and regional programmes. To assist country offices to enhance relationships with implementing partners, several country management staff members are seeking a GSHA partnership policy to guide them in the cases where a partner is not performing to the level expected. In addition, a policy describing expectations could help both the GSHA staff and the partner to better understand expectations, and could avoid instances that may require too much time from GSHA managers.

Strength - One of GSHA's primary strengths with respect to programme effectiveness is in the creation and maintenance of solid relationships with governments at the central and local levels. Government officials can be impediments or facilitators of GSHA programme implementation. From the field visits and remote interviews of programme management, it is clear that this is a central pillar of GSHA's strategy for effective programme implementation. It also differentiates GSHA when seeking donor support, as many large NGOs and consultancies do not pursue such relationships to the extent that GSHA does. Notably, government officials interviewed over the course of the field research were universally positive in their view of GSHA as excellent collaborators, and talented implementers.

Strength and weakness – Project duration is a two sided coin. GSHA prefers and strives to have long duration projects (3 years or longer) in order to have time for interventions to take hold, and for learning by small holder farmers to be firmly engrained over several growing seasons. In addition, more complex activities such as establishing village savings and loans and cooperative development also take several years of trial and error to become a strong organization, and constant and consistent mentoring by GSHA field staff is crucial. However, the evaluation team noted several short duration projects (18 months or less), which were very costly in terms of staff time and resources, with very limited impact, and most likely compromised sustainability. Development of smallholders and supporting organizations in agriculture simply do not lend themselves to short term projects, unless the goal is only to provide infrastructure. GSHA needs to continue to pursue long duration projects, and carefully evaluate the true cost and effectiveness of accepting short duration assignments.

II.4 Measurement – GSHA dedicates significant resources to conducting a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation regime. Each country office has a dedicated M&E specialist, which is supported by two staff members in HQ that support CO staff with training and advice on design of monitoring protocols for new projects. Country offices are responsible for providing comprehensive end-of-year reports, and also conduct in-depth evaluations using IHM/HEA and a number of other evaluations covering gender issues, smallholder satisfaction, and other techniques in a constant effort to monitor progress and to be able to report effectively to donors.

The end-of-year reports produced by individual country offices provide comprehensive quantitative and qualitative information on all programmes/projects. The reports follow a unified format across countries, which provides GSHA management with critical information not only on program progress, but also discloses projects that may need additional resources or need a strategic adjustment. These reports also cover all projects regardless of funding source, and are useful to programme staff at country and HQ level, and provide a solid platform for presenting quantitative data (via individual indicators) and qualitative data, (via narrative sections and success stories). In particular, the narrative sections complement the numerical data presented per the programme indicators, and thus provide good descriptions on how programmes have impact.

GSHA has a very robust measurement regime that is based on a measuring for results approach –based and is expanding to include innovative approaches to measurement at both micro and meso levels: the Individual Household Method (IHM) and the Household Economy Approach (HEA)³. The IHM/HEA approach describes the distribution of income in a defined population and simulates the impact of a livelihood activity on the ability of a household to access basic food and non-food needs. The IHM/HEA approaches are conducted for all programmes that are over three years in duration and are above a certain funding threshold. The results measurement tools, HEA and IHM, provide an important methodology for analysing the impact of initiatives, which is exactly the impact data GSHA donors have been requesting. Application of the HEA/IHM varied between the two countries visited, in one all of the data being collected in-house, and in the other utilising local extension agents and interns.

In addition to innovative methods, such as the HEA/IHM approach, specific M&E activities are conducted to address specific targeted groups or to evaluate impact on cross-cutting issues such as gender. New indicators have been developed to cover gender and nutrition, and a new monitoring tool for gender, voice choice and control has been developed. For instance, the ART project in Ethiopia has an innovative way to measure contribution/attribution issues in rural transformation, and helped GSHA to gain understanding of the impact on the malt barley project on local communities as well as to evaluate impact assessment tools. Another monitoring effort has been to utilize anthropometric nutritional surveys conducted in Uganda, which permits GSHA to better measure the impact of their activities.

Together, these efforts have been effective in giving GSHA management a clear picture of whether projects are achieving their goals, and also addressing the demands of donors. While rigorous standards are being met, the evaluation team noted that the workload on the country office staff is very high, and for M&E officers, who may also have additional program management responsibilities, can border on the extreme. Continuing capacity building and support from HQ to country office staff is needed to ensure performance measurement results remain at their high level. What could assist GSHA to ensure M&E activities continue to meet high standards would be the development of a monitoring and evaluation manual. The M&E manual would clearly state what tools, measurements, and reports are expected, and how to do them. It also may assist in reducing methods and formats, and set limits on M&E requirements for short-duration pilot projects, which are currently subject to full evaluation. The M&E manual may also provide a platform of expectations to new donors, and could reduce the likelihood of introducing a new standard of M&E for each new project.

³ Implemented by Evidence for Development as a contracted technical advisor.

II.5 Cross Cutting Issues

II.5.a Changing climate – Across its programme countries, GSHA has been very effective at developing climate-smart agriculture activities. In addition, field work in climate smart agriculture have also been utilized to strengthen GSHA’s policy influencing work. Some of the activities identified via programme documentation, and triangulated via the field research are:

- improved agronomic practices,
- increased crop diversification,
- introduction of drought tolerant crop varieties,
- introducing low-carbon technologies
- Disaster risk management,
- Conservation of the natural resource base (soil quality, wetlands, small-scale landscape approaches, drip-irrigation)
- Conservation agriculture. systems, afforestation/reforestation).

Both climate-smart agriculture *and* conserving the natural resource base have a direct impact on increased agricultural productivity, and therefore feed into the core goal of reducing vulnerability in targeted populations. An excellent example is the DISCOVER programme in Malawi that is succeeding on all these counts. One farmer in the DISCOVER programme reported to the evaluation team that utilization of pit agriculture increased his yield of maize three-fold. In addition, the effective implementation of such programmes to address climate change are built on GSHA’s strengths of community organising and association/cooperative development, which further increases the effectiveness and sustainability of programmes.

II.5.b Nutrition – GSHA has effectively integrated nutrition-related activities when they explicitly form part of the programme, as in the DISCOVER programme in Malawi. However, nutrition-specific activities have not been effectively incorporated into *all* programmes/projects. In some cases, increased crop diversity, such as the introduction of fruit trees, poultry production, or new seed varieties for vegetables with the goal of raising family income, has acted as a proxy for a nutrition-related activity to provide a wider range of food sources. However, this has not been uniformly the case in the context of all such programmes, as new and additional crops are treated as cash crops only, and are not incorporated into the household diet as has been reported by country management staff in Zambia, Uganda, Kenya, and West Africa. In general, however, dedicated nutrition-related activities have proven successful, such as in the DISCOVER programme, where beneficiaries report benefiting from nutrition training, and receiving fruit tree and vegetable seedlings.

In addition, GSHA in programme countries (Ethiopia, Malawi, Uganda) has joined groups/coalitions that are part of the Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) movement (also supported globally by Irish Aid). GSHA’s access to community-level groups and civil society networks, as well as its policy strategy, position it well to synergise with these important international movements. Further development of these initiatives, such as a more explicit articulation of how GSHA will engage on a policy/movement level in its Nutrition Policy⁴ is recommended.

⁴ GSHA’s 2012 *Nutrition and Agriculture Policy* notes the importance of the SUN movement, but does not expressly articulate any engagement or support strategies.

II.5.c Gender/youth – In the Self Help Africa Strategic Plan 2011-2015, gender and youth are only mentioned with respect to targeted groups being included in a non-discriminatory way. Gender is not mentioned in the strategic objectives, and the Post-merger Interim Programme Strategy only mentions being “committed to improving participation and benefits of women and marginalised groups.” However, the Self Help Africa Strategic Plan 2011-2015 has a more robust focus on women stating “Across all outcomes we are committed to improving participation and benefits for women and marginalised groups.” Recently, GSHA has developed a 5-level assessment tool for gender inclusion in country level programming, and has also created a Guide to Gender and Inclusion that will support mainstreaming gender into GSHA programming. In addition, 5 of the 6 core countries have gender and nutrition coordinators, which clearly demonstrates GSHA’s commitment to incorporating gender issues into programmes. All programmes document participants by gender, and there are significant programmes that focus on women participants, such as VSLAs in DISCOVER in Malawi, and RuSACCO in Ethiopia. All cooperative and community based groups have women participants. While women are included in monitoring and participation, there is limited *gender-focused* programming. GSHA is effective at including women in its programmes, and has reported some good successes in women’s participation (e.g. the ELITE programme in Zambia, of which 74% of beneficiaries are women), but structural inclusion of gender and youth in programming could be improved⁵.

In addition, collection of M&E data on gender for IAPF measurement frameworks has not yet taken place, although the internal M&E tool for assessing women’s empowerment (Checklist for assessing decision-making power of women), is a potentially useful measurement tool if applied consistently.

II.6 Policy – GSHA has been effective in promoting policy objectives domestically and internationally, with specific successes in programme countries, notably:

- Development of forest management laws in Zambia,
- Apiculture laws in Uganda,
- Seed laws in Ethiopia.

The latter occurred even with the challenges of the Government of Ethiopia’s ban on the participation of NGOs in promoting advocacy. In addition, GSHA has maintained a robust policy presence in Ireland with participation in the Dóchas network, the Consortium on GBV, and internationally in its participation in a range of conferences, notably its individual seat at FAO conferences. Also, in UK with ASFG including work on the World Bank’s EBA indicator development process. The approach to policy work is being addressed via the current formulation of a specific policy strategy (with associated results framework for policy), that will be introduced to country offices in the near term. The merger between Gorta and SHA has led to a hiatus in the development and rollout of policy objectives. However, as the complementarities of the merged organisations become embedded in the coming short-term period, the current policy strategy should begin to bear fruit.

At country office level, resources to effectively promote a policy agenda are insufficient to expand GSHA’s current role, the responsibilities for which typically fall almost entirely on country directors. Therefore, even a more robust strategy being generated from HQ may not translate into increased

⁵ A new programme in Ghana and Kenya focusing specifically on women in the cashew value chain is a positive example of initiatives focused on women.

policy activity and greater impact at the country level without an expansion in capacity. That said, continuing to lead by example, and demonstrate effective programming (such as the community based seed production in Ethiopia), will allow GSHA to continue to have significant impact on policies that will have a positive impact on agriculture, nutrition, and the environment. Given the challenges that the evaluation team observed on the part of country management with respect to time and access to decision makers, any expansion of effort in the policy arena should be carefully matched with the capacity (time, technical ability) of country offices to engage in this effectively.

III. Efficiency

The efficiency of GSHA's activities was evaluated in terms of sufficiency of resources, having adequate systems in place, and suitability of partnerships. In general, GSHA has succeeded in ensuring efficiency throughout its operations.

III.1 Resources – Regarding staffing, GSHA at all levels enjoys an exceptional level of professional and dedicated staff. Programme staff in Ethiopia all had advanced university degrees in the appropriate areas of study. More important is the sense of ownership of GSHA activities and achievements that the evaluation team noted amongst staff at the country office level. In the course of the evaluation project site field visits, field-level employees (facilitation coordinators, etc.) in both Ethiopia and Malawi exhibited strong technical skills and excellent motivation that add value to the projects and programmes. Evaluation interviews with country directors and HQ staff also highlighted the strong skills, educational qualifications, experience and motivation of staff.

In efficiency terms, GSHA has attracted and retained high-performing staff despite being in the middle of salary ranges for development employees (according to country level finance managers that were interviewed). In addition, GSHA emphasises keeping costs to a minimum, with a staged approach to recruiting staff as needed (e.g. the sharing of technical portfolios amongst specialists such as gender/nutrition). However, in an attempt to strike a balance between efficiency and effectiveness, the evaluator noted that staff may have workloads that border on excessive, leading to dilution of effectiveness and ultimately inefficiency. Again, GSHA is very fortunate to have the quality of staff it does, and from a management perspective should maintain a focus on employee retention.

In terms of physical resources, with respect to the two field visit countries (Ethiopia and Malawi) the evaluation team noted some differences. While both country offices report sufficient resources for administrative support, the quality of logistics assets between the two countries varies greatly, Ethiopia being significantly better-equipped, potentially impacting the capacity of the Malawi office to effectively deliver programme support services.

In terms of scaling up, the evaluation team noted potential constraints on staff and physical resources. The impact of scaling up depends largely on what model will be followed for new programmes: direct implementation, partner-led implementation, or a combination of the two. Direct implementation will put significant pressure on physical resources, as well as management resources, as more staff will have to be hired and managed by GSHA country offices. In any case, GSHA country offices have been flexible in scaling up for new programmes. For instance, the Malawi country office is in the process of starting a new, large programme funded by the MCA, and will be adding 8 new employees in the next few months bringing the staff to 40 from 32. Fortunately, the Malawi country office has sufficient office space to accommodate the scaling up, but the space constraints in the Ethiopia country office would make such scaling up problematic. Therefore, scaling up decisions need to be framed in terms of physical and staff resources which vary by country office.

III.2 Within Budget – Budgeting decisions for programmes fall within the parameters of a donor funded project, or a project funded by unrestricted funding from HQ. All relevant interviewees report that budgets for all projects are strictly adhered to, with quarterly senior management meetings providing a forum for reviewing all individual programme expenditure, with exploration of any

over/under spending. In general, the GSHA financial management process is transparent and hence ensures good accountability.

The merger of Gorta with SHA resulted in an expansion of the merged unrestricted funding reserve, and expectations among staff in the country offices were that additional funds would be made available to make salaries more competitive, increase fundraising activities through greater leveraging of institutional donor funding, and better support to policy initiatives. However, the perception among most staff who discussed this issue with the evaluation team is that such increases in scope of activities did not materialise. Management of such expectations among country-level and technical staff to ensure appropriate focus on roles and programme pipelines is warranted.

III.3 Systems

III.3.a Planning – GSHA has a robust system of program planning, where a programme funding team in HQ investigates all funding opportunities to ensure they fit with GSHA’s programme strategy. The evaluation team observed that planning for new programmes is done, within the parameters of the 2011-2015 GSHA programme strategy and individual sectoral policies. The programme strategy, in combination with country strategies, provides good overall direction for what programmes or projects should be pursued. Currently, country offices contribute to identifying funding sources and developing proposals for new programmes/projects. HQ also identifies and recommends projects and funding sources that should be developed in conjunction with the country offices. An example of efficiency in planning is in Malawi, where in 2015, GSHA Malawi successfully bid on three of four proposals submitted, despite the increased workload on key staff.

However, as observed by the evaluation team, and from the perspective of the country offices, planning and proposal development are very time consuming exercises. In some cases, there is not full buy-in on behalf of the country office as to whether a specific project should be pursued or not. This may be due to either a strategic disagreement, or a concern for time and capacity to fully participate in the proposal process. Therefore, while GSHA ensures all programmes meet strategic and organizational goals, improved communication could help to ameliorate any misunderstandings of the planning process on behalf of the country offices.

III.3.b Policies – As discussed above, the majority of GSHA programmes and projects are implemented in an efficient manner, and contributing coherently to the achievement GSHA’s strategic objectives. However, the ongoing efficiency challenge is to balance fundraising for organisational growth with a focus on strategic objectives and technical rigour. Resolving this challenge may be facilitated through developing and/or strengthening policies for programme development to ensure potential programmes/projects are in line with GSHA’s strategic goals. In addition, selection of partners also could benefit from stronger direction (discussed further below). Formal policies on when, how, and with whom to collaborate would improve overall efficiency of the programme.

III.3.c Procedures – GSHA financial management practices, built on the solid foundation of SHA’s systems, are effective and efficient, and have incorporated the more rudimentary Gorta systems post-merger. Financial management systems between HQ and COs are reported by staff at all levels to be strong and well supported. An issue noted at CO level is the variability of financial disbursement schedules between HQ and COs (changed from quarterly to monthly) and challenges among former Gorta offices in adapting to the SHA format (biannual disbursements directly to partner

NGOs). Partners reported difficulties in adjusting to the new system, with CO staff reporting delayed payments. Partner NGOs are dependent on this funding to conduct GSHA activities, and a two week delay can have a direct and concomitant impact on implementation. GSHA may want to consider either improving current procedures, or switch back to a less frequent disbursement schedule

III.4 Partnerships – As per its strategic plan, GSHA implements a wide range of partnerships across programme countries. The evaluation has determined that GSHA has been prudent with respect to partner selection, and has tended to develop relationships that last for years, and beyond the time frame of a defined programme. Such a partnership model is in line with generally-held principles of effective partnerships⁶, and is a strong element of GSHA's overall implementation model. The range of GSHA's relationships that fall within the rubric of partnerships is broad, and covers roles in subordinate relationships (donors), facilitating relationships (government), collaborative relationships (CSOs, NGO, international organisations), and supervisory relationships (local NGOs, implementing partners). For impacting the efficiency of GSHA programming, the supervisory relationships are the most critical as they will directly determine success or failure in achieving programme output, outcome, and impact.

III.4.a Outcomes – GSHA's partnerships are essential to creating an impact on the livelihoods of smallholder farmers. In many cases, programmatic success is directly linked to the capacity and willingness of partners to engage with the programme/project. One key category of partner that determines programmatic success is government at both local and national levels. Most GSHA initiatives include government involvement at the planning and implementation phases, a strong positive aspect that not only builds partnerships and facilitates programme/project implementation, but also generates ownership of initiatives among local stakeholders. Many of GSHA's agricultural productivity initiatives, such as DISCOVER in Malawi and CBSP in Ethiopia, include an element of capacity building of local public-sector agricultural extension agents, which is a cornerstone to ensuring sustainability of project outcomes. In addition to training of these stakeholders, the evaluation team found that GSHA maintains good relations with key government officials at national, regional and local levels, which greatly improves the efficiency of programme implementation. An example of the dividends of relationship-building with government officials was noted by the evaluation team in Ethiopia, where implementation of the USAID-funded AGP-LMD project (for which GSHA is a sub-contractor to CNFA), was having communications difficulties with the regional government. CNFA requested GSHA's assistance in resolving the matter, and the relationship between the GSHA country director and the relevant government officials permitted the issue to be resolved promptly. Such partnerships at local, regional and national government levels is a significant advantage of GSHA over other (often larger) international agencies, and are a strength that was apparent to the evaluation team in all country offices surveyed.

Local NGOs/CSOs are also critical to GSHAs efficiency, effectiveness and success. The great majority of NGO partners interviewed were very complimentary and appreciative of GSHA and its approach to partnerships, and were seeking to continue the relationship.

Exceptions to the trend of strong partnerships were seen where NGOs did not perform to contract (and usually due to issues of motivation rather than of capacity). Interviewees reported such issues having a direct impact on programme outcomes. In addition, inefficiencies were noted by management

⁶ See Mancuso-Brehm, Promoting Effective North-South NGO Partnerships, INTRAC, 2001

interviewees related to delayed payments, which directly affects the ability of the partner NGO to perform its activities. In general, however, GSHA's management of the relationships with implementing partners/NGOs has been good.

GSHA also applies partial direct implementation models of programming, with limited partnerships with local organisations with clearly defined responsibilities. This model has been adopted successfully by the DISCOVER project in Malawi, and has increased efficiency by ensuring closer management and mentoring of local NGOs. However, as mentioned previously, most local NGOs bring critical technical abilities and strong local connections to the table, and should remain a significant part of GSHA's implementation strategy. Therefore, such an implementation model should only be adopted where the capacity to effectively and efficiently implement programmes/projects by local partners is insufficient or does not exist.

III.4.b Policies – The management of NGO partner expectations regarding programme implementation performance was frequently noted by country office management interviewed by the evaluation team, along with the need for criteria in partner NGO selection. Significant management effort is devoted to maintaining these partnership relationships, and GSHA programme management and staff members expressed the desire for additional guidance on selection and management of local NGO partners. Others also noted a need for a defined partnership policy in this regard, and are specifically seeking (from HQ) guidelines (selection, expectations, procedures) to be shared with partners. This would assist in avoiding misconceptions or misunderstanding when partners enter into individual relationships with GSHA country offices. While differences in performance of partners are inevitable, an efficient and coherent partnership policy will build trust and provide CO managers with the guidance they need to manage such relationships.

IV. Impact

Through monitoring of outcomes as per programmatic RBFs (results-based frameworks), and impact assessment via IHM/HEA surveys, the evaluation team concludes that GSHA is achieving its programme objectives and goals. The evaluation desk review, interviews and direct observation via field work has served to support results reported across the organisation.

IV.1 Activities lead to Outcomes – A desk review of country level RBFs by the evaluation team indicates programmatic achievement of intended outputs and outcomes. Similarly, RBFs for donor-funded programmes (specifically Irish Aid and DFID) indicate substantial achievement of results vs. planned targets.

Field observations and interviews with beneficiaries as part of this evaluation research indicate that uptake of programme interventions is widespread and enthusiastic, and they are creating a demonstrated impact on the lives and livelihoods of smallholder farmers. The IHM/HEA evaluations also report positive impacts of GSHA programmes, and differences in adoption rates of utilisation of technical training in agriculture and nutrition from IHM/HEA surveys provides important and timely feedback to partners and staff of the need to adjust programmes where necessary. The evaluation found no instances where a positive impact was not being achieved.

IV.2 Scaling up – The evaluation encountered many good examples where projects were scaled up either during implementation or after a first-round programme was completed, and noted specific instances where other donors were attracted to expand GSHA activities, such as with the Edget Seed Union in Ethiopia which is now getting significant support from USAID's AGP-AMDe programme . In Ethiopia, the evaluation researcher visited the Raya Wakena farmers cooperative union in Dodola, which GSHA helped to form in 2004, and supported through the end of the SMART programme at the end of 2013. During that time, the union expanded its membership from 9 primary cooperatives in 2 districts to 70 primary cooperatives in 4 districts, and currently has 20,979 members involved in seed production and grain marketing. In the last years of the SMART programme, GSHA assisted Raya Wakena to arrange finance for investment in its capital equipment, thus expanding its range of services. In addition Raya Wakena also qualified for assistance from USAID's Farm Store project implemented by CNFA. GSHA's 10-year relationship with the cooperative allowed them to scale up and provide these additional services (harvesters and farm stores) to members, who also now receive 70% of the union's annual profits.

Another example of scaling up directly observed as part of the evaluation was the Edget Seed Producers Farmer Union, also part of the recently completed SMART programme. GSHA also facilitated the founding of this cooperative in 2004, and has helped it expand to 18 primary cooperatives with 1,138 members that are involved exclusively in seed multiplication. As the union grew, GSHA assisted with the creation of a testing laboratory, and also provided storage facilities for 13 of the primary cooperatives. In 2012, due to the success of the cooperative, USAID's AGP-AMDe programme provided assistance in capacity building and training, introduction of new technologies, market facilitation, and provision of infrastructure.

In addition, GSHA's partnership with the Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA), an independent government organisation, has resulted in joint development of a model for private sector seed multiplication that will be duplicated throughout the country. Therefore, by creating and fostering

a new industry in Ethiopia, GSHA has managed to scale up the efforts of Edget itself, in addition to providing the technical and management format to expand the industry nationally.

IV.3 Access to quality services – GSHA successfully seeks to ensure quality of services available to beneficiaries through training of local agricultural extension agents and working towards sustainable programmes that benefit communities on an ongoing basis. Desk review data and field research indicate that GSHA is achieving its targets in this regard, particularly with respect to the ultimate outcome of improved services: increased production levels among smallholder farmers (GSHA reported achievement of 92% of targets for the 2012-2014 period)⁷.

The FEDFES project reviewed in Malawi as part of the evaluation research exemplifies the improving quality of services provision. The project works closely with local agriculture officials and extension agents in addition to creating lead farmers to introduce and expand the planting of improved varieties of seed. Beneficiary farmers interviewed reported that the improved seeds are twice as productive as traditional varieties, and are preferred by consumers when taken to market. The pass-on of the programme has satisfied all 257 members of the local club, and have provided a saleable surplus to some women club members who previously had no money to purchase an improved variety. In addition, GSHA is also introducing the village savings and loan concept. The agriculture officers are replicating the programme in other villages, and providing quality services to a village that will increase incomes, and also provide greater availability of highly nutritious beans for household consumption.

IV.4 Variation between country offices – GSHA country offices share some important commonalities, in particular the level of qualified and motivated staff and the close relationship country offices maintain with local and national governmental organisations. These relationships provide improved access to local areas, and often result in improved capacity of local officials and technical advisors.

However, key differences were also noted between country offices, specifically with respect to management/administrative organisation and management of resources. Organisational charts and titles vary greatly between country offices, with some structures reviewed being simple, straightforward, and efficient, and others less so. Such differences were evident to the evaluation team primarily on the programme side, with financial and administrative/logistical policies/procedures being consistent and effective. In resource terms, the evaluation team noted variation across country offices with respect to logistics. A number of country offices report insufficient staff resources to keep up with the growth in programmes, leading to a very heavy workload on high-performing staff, with concomitant risks to morale and motivation, and ultimately retention of staff (per GSHA Strategic Objective 3). However, despite the variations between country offices, implementation of programmes/projects was consistently viewed by the evaluation team to be of a high standard, and the impact of all programmes reviewed to be consistently good.

IV.4.a Innovative approaches – From GSHA's internal and externally reported results, triangulated with the field research, the evaluation team concludes that GSHA programmes are having the intended impact on beneficiaries, with essentially all projects being innovative in promoting new ways to produce and market agricultural products. Programmes are also innovative and reflect current

⁷ Irish Aid RBF report 2014

best practice in agriculture by the themes they pursue in terms of improving resilience, addressing climate change, and promoting food security. Technically, programmes remain innovative in introducing improved varieties of seeds, new planting techniques, and ways of doing business.

The evaluation team noted that the GSHA West Africa regional office in Burkina Faso exhibited an innovative approach to funding in its successful private sector partnerships in the cashew sector. As part of the project in Benin for cashew value chain development, GSHA is facilitating support from government extension agents for a private sector cashew processing company (Tolaro), and building trust between the two. This has allowed the project to expand its reach to more beneficiaries without requiring additional GSHA resources. In another project in Ghana and Kenya, GSHA has successfully attracted funding from the Walmart Foundation to replicate the project. These projects have also resulted in partnerships with leading organisations in cashew production (African Cashew Initiative and African Cashew Alliance) to take advantage of technical and marketing expertise. This innovative partnering and collaboration with private sector companies is a model to be considered throughout GSHA programme countries.

IV.4.b Unintended consequences – There were no instances where a clear negative impact from GSHA programming was reported. However, one potential issue reported by country offices in Kenya, Zambia, Uganda and West Africa was that of the production of highly nutritious foods, such as eggs, vegetables and fruit, being introduced to smallholder farmers, with most of the production going to market due to the smallholders need for cash, and little remaining within the household for consumption. This directly affects achievement of GSHA’s household nutrition objectives, and can have a secondary negative impact on the empowerment of women, where cash crops, and the proceeds of their sale, are controlled by men. This result was noted by GSHA managers, who reported to the evaluation team to be considering adding nutrition-related activities to educate households on the importance of nutrition, and retaining at least a portion of the diversified crops they are being encouraged to grow through GSHA projects for household use. This was not an issue reported in the two countries visited, and the evaluator noted that in the project most at risk of this behaviour by promoting beans for sale and consumption (FEDFES in Chitipa, Malawi), farmers were retaining a significant portion of the new variety of beans for household consumption. Nonetheless, such potential risks to direct programme objectives such as nutrition, or cross-cutting themes such as gender or youth empowerment, should be noted by technical staff and appropriate strategies to mitigate and monitor this risk built into programme strategies.

IV.5 Farm Africa/PPA funding – GSHA is continuing to benefit greatly from the consortium it has formed with Farm Africa to receive Program Partnership Arrangements (PPA) funds from DFID. According to the latest GSHA Management report, the PPA funds account for 23% of annual unrestricted funding, and 11% of total annual funding overall. PPA funds have allowed GSHA to undertake a number of initiatives in the policy area, as well as supporting the management and administrative functions in GSHA HQ and country offices.

Participation in the consortium has resulted in stronger relationships with DFID and Farm Africa. GSHA continued to engage DFID through participation in PPA Learning Groups on Resilience, Gender and Empowerment & Accountability, along with attending other PPA meetings. In addition, GSHA has remained in close contact with DFID representatives in the program countries of Malawi, Zambia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. With respect to Farm Africa, the relationship has continued to exceed

expectations, and GSHA and Farm Africa have had preliminary discussions on a possible merger, in addition to continuing to conduct joint research, policy, and learning. In Ethiopia, Farm Africa and GSHA have also moved beyond being a strategic consortium to becoming implementing partners.

Results that have been reported to DFID indicated that the Consortium has been meeting or exceeding its targets in increasing wealth and food security for just over 680,000 households in program countries. PPA also supported policy work of the Consortium by working with civil society, governments, and private sector stakeholders to produce positive change through new policies that impact 460,000 households. Livelihoods have also been improved for 600,000 small holder farmers through increasing production of key crops and commodities, and also improving access to markets for over 660,000 smallholders. The consortium has also been successful in developing major new resilience programs, with both partners receiving grant funding from DFID's BRACED programme, and GSHA continuing to receive DFID funding through its DISCOVER programme in Malawi. PPA has also supported the focus on gender through the development of a Gender Action Plan, development of the "Voice, Choice, Control" monitoring tool, and participation in national and global forums on gender.

V. Sustainability

The sustainability of GSHA's programmes was evaluated in terms of the likelihood of project impacts being continuing beyond programme completion. In addition, the factors contributing to sustainability were assessed in specific areas of intervention of cooperative and agri-enterprise development, capacity building, access to credit, and farmer training.

V.1 Likelihood of sustainability – The evaluation finds that GSHA programmes have a high likelihood of being sustainable. Most programmes integrate association formation, capacity building of officials and technicians, introduce access to credit where needed, and focus on knowledge based interventions (vs. provision of goods and infrastructure). These factors are integral to the design and implementation of GSHA programmes, and greatly strengthen overall impact. During the evaluation field visit to Ethiopia, it was observed that GSHA has supported the formation, growth, and diversification of cooperatives over a period of 10 years, across several funding schemes, and continues to provide advisory services even after a project is completed. This exceptional level of support, combined with strong relationships with individual communities, will greatly increase the likelihood that associations will continue to thrive independently and sustainably. As mentioned previously, there are some short-duration pilot programmes that have been launched, and their sustainability may not be as promising. Agricultural development programmes all require several growing seasons for farmers to adapt to new technologies, and to learn from mistakes. Support to cooperatives and farmer organisations also take more than one annual growing season to fully develop the business acumen to ensure sustainability. However, this limitation of duration is well understood by GSHA staff in the field, and they strive to seek additional funding to extend these smaller programmes, and thereby increasing the likelihood of sustainability.

V.2 Factors contributing to sustainability

V.2.a Coops and agri-enterprises – The development of farmer cooperatives or associations are essential to the sustainability of a project, and GSHA ably includes this in most of its large scale projects. The evaluation noted the central nature and success of cooperative development in a cooperative-friendly environment such as Ethiopia. The cooperatives that GSHA has created over the years of programme implementation in Ethiopia remain viable and growing, constantly adding members and expanding services to its members. In Malawi, where the cooperative movement has had a mixed history, GSHA has managed to create strong general cooperatives such as FEDFES, and has successfully facilitated the formation of VSLAs via the DISCOVER project. This is particularly notable since earlier attempts to create cooperative development organizations in past decades by large scale development projects in Malawi largely failed due to 'rent-seeking' behaviour by local cooperative managers and competition by middle men. Malawi still does not strongly support cooperatives with either the rule of law, or specific cooperative oriented legislation.

V.2.b Capacity building – GSHA has wisely partnered with local and national governments to achieve its programme objectives. A key aspect of this cooperation involves capacity building of government officials, including assisting in planning and programme development, as in Ethiopia's CBSP project in Halaba, or training local extension agents in both FEDFES and DISCOVER programmes in Malawi. Most of these programmes augment official capacity through a lead farmer concept, which expands the amount of advisory services available to local farmers when there are not enough government agricultural extension agents available. This is especially important, since

technology in agriculture is always changing, and governments are not always able to keep the skills of its extension agents up to date. GSHA steps in and provides this critical training that will leave better trained extension agents after the GSHA programmes have finished.

V.2.c Access to credit – GSHA has an excellent record of creating and expanding community savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs) in Ethiopia, and village savings and loans (VSLAs) in many of its projects in Malawi. When properly formed and advised over several years, these have become self-sustaining groups, and become a reliable way for small-holder farmers to expand their ability to increase agricultural production, or to develop a trading business. Beneficiaries interviewed recounted how their income has increased as a result of the loans, and the leadership of the credit organisations report low levels of borrowing for consumption purposes. The popularity of the credit programmes is such that the evaluation team noted reports of substantial numbers of additional members applying for membership, and in the case of VSLAs, new groups that seek to form. GSHA's excellent work in bringing and introducing credit to people that never had it will be an important and sustainable contribution to programme areas long after programmes are completed.

However, one exception to the consistent level of successful implementation is where VSLAs were introduced in the concluding year of a programme, such as in Malawi's FEDFES programs. Lending in agricultural communities is dictated by the crop calendar, with money coming in and loan payments going out at the same time annually, and not on an ad hoc basis throughout the year. Therefore, several lending cycles are required, (i.e. several years), before the VSLAs are fully formed and able to operate independently. Therefore VSLAs need to be included at the beginning of multi-year projects.

V.2.d Knowledge-based interventions – Training of farmers forms a core activity of all GSHA programmes. GSHA supports primarily knowledge based activities, which will help farmers to utilise better agronomic techniques that improve livelihoods. Sustainability is further enhanced by GSHA's successful community-based extension models, which feature lead farmers that will continue to provide advice after a formal programme ends. Through effective advisory services, cooperatives begin to act like well run businesses. VSLAs and SACCOs grow, and continue to serve more and more community members. GSHA has done an excellent job of ensuring training remains a central part of all of its activities, and this will result in greater sustainability. Also, training is a difficult but rewarding method of development, and other activities, such as direct provision of materials and infrastructure, can be much easier to implement and measure. GSHA is to be commended on its training based approach, and the sustainable results it produces.

VI. Conclusions

This section details the evaluation team's conclusion regarding GSHA's performance with respect to its internal strategic objectives⁸, IAPF objectives, and provides suggestions for further refinement and development of GSHA's programme strategy.

VI.1 SHA Strategic Objective 1 – *Enable smallholders to achieve viable livelihoods from the intensification and diversification of agriculture and greater integration into markets.*

The evaluation team concludes that GSHA has been successful in meeting this objective.

On a **quantitative** basis, the analysis (see above and **Annex 5**) of recent year end reports and results frameworks indicate that most projects are surpassing, meeting, or are close to meeting, programme targets. While many programmes are ongoing, and thus assessment of final results or downstream impacts was not feasible, most projects appear to be successfully achieving their planned outcomes for their stage in the project cycle, with further gains in key metrics likely in the coming year. GSHA should continue to seek methods to account for programme impact beyond the end of the project cycle on both a qualitative and quantitative basis.

The evaluation team also noted that some programme countries are putting resources into some very labour-intensive indicators (specifically gathering anthropometric data to measure nutritional stunting), which, in order to do correctly, requires a significant input of expertise and resources. It may be a more efficient use of resources to rely on already-published sources of nutritional data for their countries (such as UNICEF's Demographic and Health Surveys, or the MICS) to make a case for the intervention, and then focus on outputs and outcomes rather than assessing impact. In any case, measurement of stunting in <5's (height-for-age) - the impact indicator - is a more long-term effect that may not be substantially changed over the course of a 2-3 year programme. Underweight (weight for age) is maybe a better indicator as it combines both wasting and stunting (acute and chronic malnutrition) - it's one of the MDG indicators.

From the **qualitative** data generated via the evaluation research, the evaluation team has noted that programme beneficiaries and partners evince a high level of satisfaction with the programmes implemented by GSHA. In addition, the majority of projects visited in Ethiopia and Malawi articulated clear programme logic in terms of their aims, objectives and implementation strategies and were within the scope of GSHA's country and overall strategies. The only exceptions were a number of small projects, which nonetheless were appropriately designed, but, being of short duration, were likely to be limited in their overall impact and sustainability. In addition to effectively implementing programmes/projects, GSHA plays technical leadership roles in several areas, including community based seed production, climate smart agriculture, resilience, and credit cooperatives/VSLAs. GSHA's core approach of working closely with government and building local technical capacity is resulting in not only programmes that are having a significant impact on improving livelihoods, but are also sustainable.

VI.2 SHA Strategic Objective 2 – *Influence others to enable smallholder farmers in Africa to prosper.*

⁸ As detailed in the SHA 2011-2015 Strategic Plan, and the 2014 GSHA Post Merger Interim Programme Strategy

With respect to this policy-oriented SO, GSHA has been partially successful in meeting its objectives. This is because the policy function has been expanded as a result of the Gorta-SHA merger. Currently, all country offices have clear policy objectives on an annual basis, and quarterly targets that need to be reported on. However, at the country office level, policy activities are considered minor in comparison to programme implementation activities, which take the great majority of staff time and resources. GSHA has been most successful in assisting host governments with the development of technically-oriented laws related to the agriculture sector in Ethiopia, Zambia, and Uganda. These will have a positive impact on smallholder livelihoods.

GSHA field staff were observed and reported to be highly participatory in policy dialogues and CSO fora, and maintain excellent relationships with governments. However, the expected leadership role as articulated in the programme strategy has not yet been substantially realised – although the evaluation team notes that the policy strategy of GSHA is still in early stages of implementation. Further embedding of this strategy, the policy assessments of programme countries that are underway, and the leveraging of the policy strengths and voice of both merged organisations will likely pay dividends in this area in the coming years.

The evaluation team notes that expectations of policy impacts for an organisation the size, and with the resources of, GSHA should be appropriate to these resources. For smaller organisations, focused policy work may pay cost-effective dividends, such as per the third objective in GSHA's IAPF programme: "Scalable proven good practice approaches for integrating farmers in agriculture value chains are documented, disseminated and demonstrably used to inform policies and improve programmes by GSHA, partners, and other development actors." GSHA has successfully delivered achievements under this objective, and it strongly reflects the impact GSHA has in its leadership roles, for example in the Ethiopian community-based seed projects, which can serve as a model to be replicated across the country, and informed the thinking behind the country's seed law. In terms of development education, GSHA has been fully successful in meeting objectives under the IAPF grant. To this end, GSHA has engaged in a range of activities to engage the Irish public primarily through the school system, and the very popular BT Young Scientists Exhibition, which, (with frequent entries of direct relevance to the developing world), intersects well with GSHA's focus as an innovative and technically-oriented organisation.

VI.3 SHA Strategic Objective 3 – *Continue to be fit for purpose*

GSHA has been successful in meeting its third strategic objective, and remains fit for purpose. The following highlights specific achievements in this regard:

Providing strategic oversight – SHA's five-year programme strategy, and the follow on Gorta/SHA interim programme strategy, have both provided a strong framework for planning, development and implementation of country programmes. Further, they have underpinned a positive organisational dynamic and culture with an appealing mission. Country level strategies build directly upon the GSHA strategy, while adding information on local characteristics and areas of programming. This process informs a strong linkage between HQ and country offices.

From a strategic perspective, the merger of Gorta and SHA (and indeed the merger of SHA with a number of other organisations over the last number of years) has resulted in flux among the governing board(s) of the merged entities, in terms of numbers, incumbents, roles and responsibilities. However,

these changes have not substantially affected the development or implementation of programmes and the merged organisation's systems (deriving largely from SHDI/SHA) have been sufficiently robust to ensure no interruptions to programme implementation or staff performance.

Financial resources – The merger between Gorta and SHA has resulted in a merged entity with robust organisational financial reserves. GSHA has also been very successful at diversifying funding sources by expanding the range of large and small donors, and making some progress in developing projects with private sector entities, as is the case in West Africa. For instance, GSHA in Malawi is about to begin a major new programme with the Millennium Challenge Corporation of the US government, which they have not worked with previously.

However, expectations among programme staff of increased availability of unrestricted funding to either undertake additional standalone initiatives, or leverage other donor funding, do not appear to have been met. While financial management is beyond the scope of this evaluation, the evaluation team does recommend that expectations of key programme staff be managed in this regard, to ensure transparency to GSHA staff and clarify any expectations for future growth or opportunities.

High performing staff - GSHA has universally attracted and retained a cadre of experienced, capable, highly credentialed, and motivated staff. In particular, technical expert roles (at HQ and country office levels), all exhibit high levels of ability and motivation. Behind the strong programmatic results at country office level is a strong headquarters that provides timely and expert technical and strategic oversight and applies strong technical solutions (Salesforce software) for HR management. Capacity building is frequently provided in key operational areas (finance, M&E, programme development) as well as technical areas in agriculture, nutrition, gender, and enterprise development. However, in some country offices, it has been a challenge to attract and retain qualified staff, and GSHA needs to remain vigilant to ensure that resources and HR policies remain adequate and competitive with the rest of the international development community.

While a certain level of attrition among staff members at programme implementation/management level is inevitable, it was not viewed by the evaluation team to be exceptional within GSHA. The implementation model of Gorta did not include significant staff presence in programme countries, and SHA's programme staff benefit from a strong organisational culture, encouraging retention. The most significant concern articulated to the evaluation team was that of substantial workloads of key programme staff. This is a subjective measure, however, and this evaluation does not draw any substantive conclusion in this regard, other than to draw management attention to a potential source of dissatisfaction or higher than expected attrition.

Strengthened systems – GSHA has taken important steps to strengthen its systems at HQ and country offices, with the introduction of SHA-derived financial systems, increased capacity to develop HR policy, and expansion of M&E functions. HQ programme management has also expanded, and should tailor its focus to assist country offices with their own capacity building and programme development. Country offices achieve value for money with adequate resources, including modest offices, average salary levels in the development field, and adequate to barely adequate transportation infrastructure. Country office financial and operations managers are very knowledgeable on local regulations, and GSHA remains fully compliant with all local requirements. Overall, GSHA has been a dynamic organisation in expanding operations and revising policies and procedures to adapt to changing conditions, such as the new

financial management system, and technical themes, which is exemplified by their command of the concept of resilience in Malawi's DISCOVER project.

VI.4 Value for Money

While the headquarters and country programme teams have an understanding of DFID's 4-E (Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Equity) approach to value for money, the focus is more on the concept of *value* rather than *money*. From the research, it is apparent that the programme meets all 4-E criteria. Where there have been weaknesses, these do not undermine the overall finding. A complete list of specific Value for Money initiatives as reported by individual countries/programmes is provided in **Annex 6**.

Economy: This measures the cost of inputs. The GSHA programme teams are aware of having a limited budget, and so pay close attention to how programme funds can be spent most effectively and efficiently. The ISG evaluation team saw evidence across all countries that GSHA has sought to reduce cost drivers and to prevent wastage of funds. For instance, GSHA country offices seek to maximise the utility of field visits through use of all staff (including appropriately-skilled support staff such as drivers) in programme activities with partners, while also using national staff wherever possible, rather than expensive international consultants.

Efficiency: This measures outputs relative to inputs. The GSHA programme has achieved against its milestones as described in the RBFs and, further, has leveraged financial and other support from international organisations so that impacts of the programmes can be realised past the end-date of programme funding. The country teams also demonstrate that they have created synergies between programme resources and other resources – both national and international.

Effectiveness: This measures the outcome relative to the inputs. It requires evidence that the money spent has led to the desired outcome. Across all GSHA countries, the evaluation has found that the programme is close to achieving or surpassing (in some cases substantially surpassing) programme targets. By facilitating broad-based, appropriate, innovative and sustainable agricultural development, GSHA has ensured that more people are able to benefit from economic development. In particular, the HEA/IHM approach, if applied consistently and to an appropriate sample of GSHA initiatives, can demonstrate effectiveness with a high level of precision.

At national/international level, the work of GSHA's programmes has a multiplier effect through its participation in a range of fora. GSHA has demonstrated its value in terms of technical expertise and is likely to continue to do so.

Equity: GSHA's programmes focus on those living in remote, rural or marginalised areas and is starting to put greater focus to address the most marginalised, such as women. However, as part of its mandate, GSHA focuses on the 'able poor' who are, by definition, not the most vulnerable. Even within its target group, a focus on women and youth is still sharpening, and the evaluation team recommends redoubling efforts, particularly with respect to rolling out and embedding its work on gender, to ensure the evident benefits of GSHA's programming are captured, and do not reinforce or exacerbate inequalities.

For the future, GSHA can improve on realising (and demonstrating) value for money by more focused investment in monitoring and evaluation, including value for money metrics and by producing more learning resources and knowledge products for use across the Organisation and by others in government and civil society. GSHA and its donor partners would also be well advised to focus on 'effectiveness' and 'equity' rather than over-emphasising 'economy'. In particular, it will be important to

ensure that there are adequate funds to ensure that programmes are able to realise their potential. Striving to keep costs down and 'make do' can be a false economy in 'value for money' terms.

VI.5 Impact of Gorta-Self Help Africa merger

The Gorta-Self Help Africa merger has had varied impacts across the range of GSHA stakeholders. The two country offices that were evaluated had had no prior in-country Gorta presence, and as such the merger had little or no impact on operations or staff. In fact, country offices without a Gorta presence have continued to use the Self Help Africa name, (which may lead to confusion regarding branding). For country offices that had both Gorta and Self Help Africa programmes, the Self Help Africa office became the country office, as Gorta generally had minimal management presence in country. Gorta employees were generally easily integrated, and programmes remained well served. Countries with a Gorta presence, and no Self Help Africa programmes, are being phased out. Individual staff concerns regarding duplication of roles (and hence staff cuts) have not been realised, and staff have been assured that, within the framework of SHA's overall strategy (notably SO3), their contributions are valued.

At GSHA headquarters, the merger has also proceeded smoothly, with similar individual concerns regarding positions and responsibilities, though concerns have similarly been allayed by senior management. Both organisations had dedicated and committed staff, though substantially different systems and philosophies in place. Gorta, for instance, maintained a predominantly HQ presence, with minimal country staff, and SHA had a much stronger field presence. Financial disbursement systems varied greatly also, with Gorta disbursing directly to partner NGOs in the field on a 6 month basis (essentially a grant provider), and SHA running disbursements through country offices per programme implementation schedules. SHA's monitoring and evaluation systems were also much more robust, as they provided greater accountability to donors, versus Gorta which was largely self-funded. The merged entity utilises SHA's considerably more robust financial and management systems, leading to improved programme performance, better tracking of outputs and resources, and resulting strong transparency and accountability. The Gorta merger partner continues to make significant contributions with respect to strategy and outreach. Staff feedback indicates a widespread perception that the merger is still in progress, with organisational styles and cultures still somewhat in transition.

As noted above, the merger of both boards of directors did not have a significant impact on programme operations, and senior management are successfully managing the transition from two boards to one (deriving individual board members from Gorta, SHA and from some of other organisations that SHA merged with in previous years). A board review by an external firm (Baker-Tilly) resulted in a number of recommendations to streamline the board composition and processes, and these are successfully being implemented on an ongoing basis.

VII. Recommendations

VII.1 Manage Growth – GSHA is currently performing strongly with respect to implementing programmes, and is on track to meet targets and objectives for all programmes. However, the evaluation process (specifically across the two country offices and HQ) highlighted that staff are working at maximum capacity, and there does not appear to be a strategy in place to manage human resources for growth. This was particularly evident with respect to programme development activities, where some country offices indicated programme development was having a negative impact on implementation, and could be rectified through generally higher staffing levels. The evaluation team notes that a senior HR manager position was recently filled at HQ level, and an assessment of staff workloads vis à vis formal roles and responsibilities should be a priority.

VII.1.a Expand HQ-CO coordination – Key informant interviews with country directors of all GSHA programme countries indicated a spectrum, in quantitative and qualitative terms, of coordination with HQ. Such a variation indicates that HQ should re-evaluate its policies and procedures with country offices, and devote additional efforts to strengthening the partnership between all country offices and HQ. As an example, GSHA should attempt to emphasise the partnership aspect of visits from HQ staff, many of which are quick advisory trips, while the country offices believe a more substantive capacity building presence (training, strategy development) would be more useful. In addition, GSHA's country coordinators at HQ level could benefit from clear internal policies on expectations and modalities on coordinating with country offices. Such policies could help to manage expectations on both sides, and reduce any misunderstandings that can naturally occur with staff turnover in both country offices and HQ. The result should be to reduce, or eliminate, tensions or misperceptions between most country offices and head office, and to ensure all stakeholders are in an optimal position to strategise for programmatic excellence and growth.

VII.1.b Rationalise fundraising – The evaluation team both observed, and received reports from country office staff in most GSHA countries, of two fundraising/programme development paradigms being implemented across GSHA offices by HQ. One approach puts the emphasis on soliciting funding, while the other prioritises adherence to strategic goals. The first approach can result in short duration pilot projects that are very costly in terms of scarce management resources at the country level, and require a disproportionate share of management resources relevant to funds raised. That being said, it is also understood that pilot projects may result in the creation of new partnerships with donors, in addition to the funds raised. Therefore, it may be prudent for HQ and country offices to take a more strategic approach on which donors and projects GSHA would like to pursue in the future, which will also increase the ability of GSHA to manage growth.

VII.1.c Bolster financial procedures – GSHA's country offices all expressed difficulty with monthly disbursements from HQ. Either a less frequent disbursement schedule should be implemented, such as bi-monthly or quarterly, or procedures tightened (including building capacity in the country offices) to ensure monthly disbursements are requested and undertaken in a more timely manner. The current disbursement frequency/timeliness has the potential to impede local partnerships, and could negatively impact intended outcomes and outputs. Associated reporting requirements on performance reporting on behalf of implementing partners and country offices that accompany disbursement requests should also be reviewed to streamline the system. A quarterly disbursement schedule would

mean four programme and financial updates a year instead of on a monthly basis. Country Offices would have funds on hand to plan and execute with implementing partners over three months, instead of programming late-arriving funds in the remaining period in the month, as if they do not complete the work, disbursements will be appropriately adjusted in the following month.

VII.2 Partnership Policy – A recurring theme noted by the evaluation team in interviews with management from country offices was the importance of partnerships, whether they be with the donor, government, or implementing partner. All GSHA stakeholders realise the critical nature of partnerships to GSHA maintaining its position as a key actor in development communities. The evaluation team noted strong GSHA performance in maintaining partnerships with governments and donors. However, regarding implementing partners, several country offices reported some inconsistency in performance, and would like some guidance in managing these crucial relationships. Some country offices have suggested GSHA develop a partnership policy, as current contracts do not address how to manage these relationships in sufficient detail. A formal partnership policy to clarify the relationship and expectations of implementing partners, and to provide guidance on selecting and evaluating partners, would also provide a reference for country managers when partner performance is in question and remedial action is needed.

VII.3 Communications Strategy – Programme management staff workloads were noted (by staff themselves, and corroborated by observations of the evaluator) across field countries to be very high. While perceptions of workload are somewhat subjective (i.e. can vary greatly from person to person), nor take into account issues of quality vs. quantity, it is worth noting that excessive workloads, for whatever reason, can impede growth and effective/efficient implementation of existing initiatives.

A potential solution to alleviate such pressures on staff may be the appointment of a communications advisor to be based in each country office who could assist in many of the structural elements of proposal development (freeing technical managers to contribute to strategy and methodology development).

Secondly, a communications advisor could develop in-country promotional material, media submissions, and success stories to expand GSHA's profile, capture hitherto unrecorded results/impacts and improve interaction with policy stakeholders. The evaluation team noted a disparity between the successful work GSHA is undertaking, and recognition/capturing of achievements outside the existing M&E frameworks. For instance, in Ethiopia the ongoing impact of former projects in community based seed cooperatives is still very relevant, but is not assessed or highlighted. Ongoing advisory services by GSHA staff to cooperatives that are not currently formally engaged in GSHA programming also goes unrecorded.

Thirdly, a communications advisor could strengthen efforts of GSHA country offices in terms of advocacy and policy by supporting the country director. Position papers, opinion pieces, and concept notes could be developed by the communications advisor to strengthen GSHA's roles in advocating for change in the context of their countries.

VII.4 Recommendations for GSHA's Future Strategy

GSHA implements a programme strategy that covers the five-year period from 2011 to 2015 to provide a framework for future projects, and also to explain to a wider audience what its mission is. In 2014, a Post Merger Interim Program Strategy was developed after the merger of Gorta and Self Help Africa, and is intended to bridge the gap until a new strategy is developed for the 2016-2020 time period. The ISG evaluation team has been requested to provide recommendations for the new strategy that emerge from the current programme evaluation. First we will provide some lessons learned from the current Post Merger Interim Program Strategy (PMIPS) and Self Help Africa Strategic Plan 2011-2015 (SHA-5), and then will provide a set of recommendations for developing the next programme strategy.

VII.4a Lesson Learned from Current Strategies to inform the new strategy – The current PMIPS was jointly developed by both Gorta and SHA staff, and largely follows the SHA 5-year strategic plan (SHA-5) that covers the period 2011-2015. The most notable addition to the PMIPS is the addition of agribusiness development as an approach, and profitable agribusiness and MSME Development as an expected result. The SHA-5 also provides the strategic objectives that inform the IAPF grant, and have also formed the backbone of the annual results based frameworks, and individual country strategies.

Comparing the two documents, it appears the SHA-5 is more of a planning and strategy document, while the PMIPS is more of a high-level strategy document with less in the way of planning. For instance, the PMIPS does not contain a timeline or quantifiable goals at the end of a time period. There are advantages to both approaches, in that the PMIPS contains more flexibility, while the SHA-5 allows for better performance measurements and a clearer outline for action. Taking the best of both: the marketing-oriented presentation of the PMIPS, with SHA-5's clearer activities and outcomes expressed as strategic objectives with performance indicators, would be a comprehensive and effective format for the successor strategy.

In terms of content, an area that would benefit from more attention is targeting. The reality observed by the lead evaluator in the field demonstrated that some programmes/projects, such as the STAR programme in Ethiopia, are working with groups (extreme poor vs. 'able poor' farmers) that are outside of the strategically targeted group. In reality, it is also challenging to delineate clear lines between the extreme poor and the able poor, and in reality most programmes may work with both. In addition, the definition of smallholder can vary by country, or within countries. Therefore, it may be advisable de-emphasize the topic of targets in the strategy, and to refer to targets only under the discussions of strategic objectives and actual activity areas. For instance, when discussing agribusiness development, the target will be small businesses and cooperatives. Discussion of resilience and climate smart agriculture will be targeted at smallholder farmers. While not critical to achieving overall GSHA goals, reducing the focus on targeted groups will eliminate inconsistencies in programme strategies, and may even serve to increase the number of beneficiaries aided overall.

Another area of content that should be reviewed is in the SHA-5 strategic objective 2 (SO2) to "Influence others to enable smallholder farmers in Africa to prosper." This strategic objective has four strategic outcomes, of which the first one is being conducted successfully (Proven models of good practice scaled up through effective documentation, dissemination and capacity building, as exemplified by the success of the seed law in Ethiopia), as is the fourth one (Increased public awareness in Ireland,

UK and USA of aid and development in Africa, demonstrated by GSHA's development education efforts in Ireland).

However, the second (Greater opportunities for the voice of smallholder farmers to be heard.) and third (Creation of a favourable policy environment for smallholder farmers, both at national and international levels.) objectives are ambitious, and possibly beyond the scope of an organization the size of GSHA. It was also noted from SHA-5 that anticipated funding of projects was to be 60% for SO1, 30% for SO2 and 10% for SO3. From field based observations and discussions with country office staff, the amount invested in SO2 was between 0 and 10% of staff time, both of which are far less than the original plan. Therefore, GSHA should consider either revising the strategic objectives regarding the enabling environment for smallholders to what is already working well (strategic outcomes 1 and 4), or consider expanding resources, including enhanced implementation of policy strategy, to work towards having a real impact on policy (strategic outcomes 2 and 3).

VII.4.b Recommendations for GSHA Strategic Plan 2016

Highlight country-level strengths – During field visits and country office management discussions, it became clear that GSHA is implementing activities very effectively on the ground, are gaining a solid reputation in the development community for innovative projects, and are considered leaders in some technical areas. Technical strengths observed in Ethiopia include community-based seed production, cooperative development, and credit cooperatives. In Malawi, GSHA is gaining a solid reputation in resilience, climate smart agriculture, and agricultural production. In West Africa, GSHA is becoming known as a leader in developing the cashew value chain, forming private sector partnerships, and water and sanitation work. By highlighting GSHA's technical expertise on the ground in a new strategy, GSHA will be able to produce a strong message on what they actually do, which is a more powerful message than what they aspire to do.

Focus on core competencies – In addition to country specific technical expertise, GSHA also needs to highlight its core competencies that extend across all countries. Chief amongst these competencies is the ability to work well with local governments, and to include them in programme inception and implementation. Due to the long standing nature of the GSHA offices, this is a distinct advantage when partnering with private companies or international consultancies, who generally have not formed good relationships since they do not work in a particular country consistently, and also greatly strengthens GSHA's ability to attract new funding sources. Another aspect of this partnership is the inclusion of government agricultural extension workers in training, and also in actual implementation of GSHA projects. This provides valuable capacity building for struggling national extension services, and also creates unparalleled sustainability for projects, as better trained extension agents join the GSHA trained lead farmers to significantly boost the access to the latest agricultural trends and techniques for smallholders. While GSHA's strong presence and relationships in their programme countries may seem integral to the identity of GSHA, it affords GSHA a tremendous advantage over other NGOs and should be highlighted.

Expand private sector partnerships – GSHA is implementing/has implemented some important and potentially significant initiatives with private sector companies (Pepsico, Diageo, Walmart). This is a departure from 'traditional' development approaches and has the potential, if the dynamics and benefits are managed correctly, of generating significant long-term benefits for farmers in developing countries. GSHA, through its strong technical leadership, is well-positioned to add value to this paradigm

and create a strong niche for itself as the 'link' between community-based producers and large-scale processing companies, and help ameliorate the risks of exploitation of small producers and agricultural labourers that have been a feature of production of such commodities as coffee and cocoa.

Greater focus on vulnerable/marginalised populations (women, youth, HIV) – not just collecting data on such groups, but specific strategies to incorporate them into the overall org. strategy and individual CO/programme strategies. The SHA Guide to Gender and Inclusion is a good practical tool and GSHA should redouble its efforts to roll it out across all programmes, with appropriate staffing (e.g. full-time gender/youth/vulnerable group specialists in COs).

Annex 1 – Terms of Reference Evaluation Questions and Analytical Framework

Main evaluation questions

The purpose of this evaluation is to both assess progress against Self Help Africa's strategic plan and provide a body of evidence for key donors.

1. Strategic Plan Questions

In relation to the strategic plan, and its Strategic Objectives, the following questions should guide the evaluation team.

1.1. Overall Strategic Programme

- 1.1.1. Summarise the evidence that demonstrates whether or not the objectives of the strategy were achieved. How robust is the evidence presented?
- 1.1.2. The mid-term-review noted challenges faced by SHA in consistently using a programmatic approach. Is GSHA operating programmatically and effectively integrating projects as part of coherent country and thematic strategies?
- 1.1.3. GSHA works in a range of partnership relationships e.g. in PPA consortium with Farm Africa, as a sub-contractor to FHI360 in Uganda and as a donor/lead partner with local NGOs/CBOs/Coops. What have been the key lessons from the different forms of partnership? How can GSHA continue to strengthen its approach to working with others?
- 1.1.4. Gorta Self Help Africa is developing a new strategy, given the ambition and focus of the new strategy, highlight the core strengths of country programmes and technical support to build on in the new strategy (i.e. excellence in some countries or programme themes that is lacking in others). Highlight core weaknesses that will need addressing during the next strategy period.

1.2. Self Help Africa Strategic Objective 1 – To enable smallholders to achieve viable livelihoods from intensification and diversification of agriculture and greater integration into markets.

Increased agricultural productivity of farming households while sustaining ecosystem services

- 1.2.1. How effectively is GSHA addressing the challenges of smallholder agriculture in the face of a changing climate? Are there elements of its approach that can be strengthened?

Better returns for smallholders in agricultural value chains

- 1.2.2. What are the lessons emerging from GSHA's engagement with private sector in programme implementation?
- 1.2.3. How are sustainability issues associated with cooperatives and agri-enterprises supported by GSHA being addressed?
- 1.2.4. Does GSHA have the expertise, within staff and/or partners at in country and head offices to scale up its work on value chains and supporting the development of agri-enterprises?

Improved nutrition and reduced vulnerability amongst the rural poor.

1.2.5. How effectively, have country programmes, integrated nutrition into project activities? Highlight good practice and barriers to more effective implementation in the future.

1.2.6. How effective is the approach to incorporating gender sensitive programming including specific targeting of women and youth in country programmes? How has this developed over the strategy period?

1.3. Self Help Africa Strategic Objective 2 – Influence others to enable smallholder farmers in Africa to prosper.

Proven models of good practice scaled up through effective documentation, dissemination and capacity building.

1.3.1. Which are the best examples of good practice that GSHA has scaled up?

1.3.2. Does GSHA have the skills and capacity to effectively document and present compelling evidence to practitioners and policy makers?

Greater opportunities for the voice of smallholder farmers to be heard.

1.3.3. How does GSHA ensure that smallholders can influence policy debates locally, nationally and internationally? Is the approach effective? Which are the best examples of good practice?

Creation of favourable policy environment for smallholder farmers at national & international levels.

1.3.4. Does GSHA have a clear strategy for policy advocacy and a robust way of assessing its contribution to policy change in the six core countries? Which are the best examples of good practice? Given the expertise of GSHA, where can it play a stronger role in operational countries and internationally?

Increased public awareness in Ireland, UK and USA of aid and development in Africa.

1.3.5. GSHA only has an active development education programme in Ireland. What are the strengths and weaknesses of GSHA's development education programme? Does the work that GSHA is doing within its country programmes integrate effectively with the development education programme?

1.4. Gorta-Self Help Africa Strategic Objective 3 – Continue to be “fit for purpose”

Financial Stability

Discuss how and why Gorta-Self Help Africa has become more financially stable.

1.4.1. What was the strategy to extend the donor base – individuals, community, trusts and foundations and major donors?

1.4.2. Which elements were successful? Where do challenges remain? How successful have efforts to increase in-county fundraising been?

1.4.3. How has the mix of expenditure changed over time? How did this support / limit the delivery of the 2011-15 Strategic Plan.

Review lessons from the merger activity that Gorta-Self Help Africa has undertaken.

- 1.4.4. With particular reference to the acquisition of Partner Africa in 2011 and the SHA-Gorta merger in 2014. Have the assumptions that underpinned the rationale for the mergers been borne out in practice?

High performing staff

- 1.4.5. What is the coherence between the strategic plan objectives, country and departmental planning, the scope of the project portfolio, staff structure and individual performance management?

Improved systems

- How effective is/was the process of implementing new systems, policies and procedures.

- 1.4.6. How have new systems and processes supported increased consideration of value for money, accountability and transparency?

2. Irish Aid IAPF and DFID PPA

To provide evidence to Irish Aid of the impact of their Programme Grant funding the following questions should also guide the evaluation. They are primarily based on Irish Aid's Programme Grant Programme Cycle Management Guidelines outline and OECD DAC's standards for evaluation.

2.1. Utility

The evaluation should:

- 2.1.1. Assess the impact of the programme and how this will be sustained
- 2.1.2. Account to stakeholders for the Programme's achievements/results against the intended purpose/outcomes.
- 2.1.3. Identify and share evidence/lessons learnt that would assist in improving Irish Aid support to civil society.
- 2.1.4. Assess whether the programme represented value for money in its efforts to deliver results.

2.2. Scope

(a) Impact and Results

- 2.2.1. The overall impact of the programme in relation to its outcome/purpose and how this compares with what was expected on an annual basis.
- 2.2.2. The key results against the outputs and how this compares against the targets set out in the results framework.
- 2.2.3. Effectiveness of the programme's logic of intervention.
- 2.2.4. The ways in which the programme improved practice by providing greater access to quality services for targeted beneficiaries.

(b) Intended Beneficiaries

- 2.2.5. Who were the direct and indirect beneficiaries? Have they been disaggregated by: gender, age, disability, HIV/AIDs status?
- 2.2.6. Evidence that the programme reached the intended target group(s).

2.2.7. Evidence that the programme made a difference to the target group(s).

(c) Value for Money

Effectiveness

2.2.8. Relevance of programme outcomes throughout the cycle given any changes in context.

2.2.9. If final programme outcomes were not achieved or more work remains, will activities continue?

2.2.10. Assess if the programme partners added value and delivered value for money.

Efficiency

2.2.11. To what extent was expenditure guided by Value for Money principles?

2.2.12. Consider if the programme was implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternative means.

Economy

2.2.13. Have unit costs increased/decreased during the programme implementation?

2.2.14. Was the programme completed within the expected budget? (Under/overspends to be detailed and explained)

(d) Innovation

2.2.15. Description of any innovative approaches of the programme that have been identified during the programme cycle or evaluation.

2.2.16. Identify and review the benefits and challenges associated with the consortium with Farm Africa for the PPA funding.

(e) Sustainability

2.2.17. Aspects of the programme that will continue once programme cycle ends. How will these aspects be funded and by whom (national/local government or other organisation)?

2.2.18. Aspects of the programme that will cease and the impact this may have.

2.2.19. Features of the programme that may be replicable elsewhere.

2.2.20. Identify major factors that influenced the achievement or non-achievement of the programme's sustainability.

(f) Counter-Factual

2.2.21. Assess what might have happened in the absence of Irish Aid and/or DFID PPA support.

(g) Realisation of Risks

2.2.22. Assess if risks identified in the original proposal and annual reports materialised. If so, how did the programme manage them in order to reduce any negative impact on results?

2.2.23. If the risks did not materialise, was this as a result of measures put into place by the programme?

(h) Contribution to Irish Aid Civil Society Policy Objectives

Establish linkages/show evidence where the programme has contributed to Irish Aid Civil Society Policy Objectives:

2.2.24. To support an enabling environment for civil society to organise and engage with government and its broader constituencies

2.2.25. To support the role of civil society in:

- promoting participation and good governance
- ensuring pro-poor service delivery and pro-poor growth
- globally and nationally, to build a constituency for development, human rights and social justice

Analytical Framework

<i>Evaluation Question</i>	<i>TOR Ref</i>	<i>Evaluation Sub-Questions</i>	<i>Target Group for Research</i>	<i>Proposed Tools</i>
1. Understand the realities of GSHA's country-based programming	-	What are the capacities of country/programme/project offices & staff and partner organizations?	CO, partners	KII/FGDs
	1.3.2	What are the quality and volume of evidence held by GSHA and partners to demonstrate impact of GSHA's programmes?	GSHA HQ, CO, partners	Desk Review, KIIs
	-	Are there different approaches to programme work/constraints across different stakeholders/geographical contexts?	All groups	KII, FGD, Desk Review
2. Strategy/ Programme Relevance	2.2.3	Is the GSHA strategy/programme logic, consistent, relevant and correct? How did it adapt to circumstances and can it be adapted further?	GSHA HQ, CO, partners	KII, FGD, Desk Review
	2.2.8			
	1.4.5	How coherent are strategic plan objectives, country and departmental planning, project portfolio scope, staff structure and individual performance management?	GSHA HQ, CO	Desk Review
	2.2.5	Do GSHA's results frameworks/logframes represent acceptable performance benchmarks that demonstrate or measure achievement of programme goals?	GSHA HQ, CO	Desk Review
3. Strategy/ Programme Effectiveness	1.1.1	Is there sufficiently robust evidence to demonstrate whether or not strategy objectives were achieved?	GSHA HQ, CO	Desk Review
	1.4.1	Was GSHA's donor/funding strategy coherent and effective in delivering the 2011-2015 strategic plan? What challenges remain?	GSHA HQ, CO	KII, Desk Review
	1.4.2			
	1.4.3			
	1.1.2	Is GSHA operating programmatically and effectively integrating projects as part of coherent country and thematic strategies?	GSHA HQ, CO	Desk Review
	2.2.3	How effectively have GSHA's programmes performed against their result framework's benchmarks/programme logic (including measurement of beneficiaries by key group)?	All groups	KII, FGD, Desk Review
	2.2.5			
	2.2.6	How did the programmes reach and affect the intended target groups?	All groups	KII, FGD, Desk Review
	2.2.7			
	1.1.4	What are the core strengths/weaknesses of GSHA's approach and programmes?	All groups	KII, FGD, Desk Review
	1.4.4	Are the risks and assumptions articulated by GSHA's strategic plan (also with ref. to the Gorta/SHA merger) and programmes both comprehensive and realistic? Did GSHA address them?	All groups	KII, FGD, Desk Review
	2.2.22			
	2.2.23			
	1.2.1	How effectively is GSHA addressing the challenges of smallholder agriculture in the face of a changing climate?	All groups	KII, FGD, Desk Review
	1.2.5	How effectively have country programmes integrated nutrition into activities? What are the good practices/barriers?	CO, Partners, Beneficiaries	KII, FGD, Desk Review
	1.2.6	How effectively have country programmes integrated gender/youth issues into activities?	CO, Partners, Beneficiaries	KII, FGD, Desk Review
	1.3.3	How does GSHA ensure smallholders can effectively influence policy debates locally, nationally and internationally?	CO, Partners, Govt, Beneficiaries	KII, FGD, Desk Review
	1.3.4	How clear is GSHA's strategy for policy advocacy and determining its contribution to policy change? Where are the key opportunities?	GSHA HQ, CO, Partners	KII, Desk Review
	1.3.5	What are the strengths, weaknesses and coherence of GSHA's development education programme?	GSHA HQ, CO	KII, Desk Review
4. Strategy/	1.2.4	Resources: Do GSHA and key stakeholders (COs and		KII, FGD,

Programme Efficiency	2.2.10	partners)have sufficient quality/quantity of expertise, human,	GSHA HQ, CO,	Desk Review
	2.2.12	financial and supply resources to realise performance goals and	Partners	
	2.2.13	scale up (particularly in value chains/agri-enterprises)?		
	2.2.14	Are programmes being completed within budget?	GSHA HQ, CO	KII, Desk Review
	1.4.6	Is programming adequately supported by systems: planning,	GSHA HQ, CO,	KII, FGD,
	2.1.4	feedback, policies & procedures? Does GSHA promote value for	Partners	Desk Review
	2.2.11	money, accountability and transparency?		
	1.1.3	Partnerships: Do GSHA's partnerships (private, government and	GSHA HQ, CO,	KII, FGD,
5. Strategy/ Programme Impact	1.2.2	civil society; sub-contractor/donor) optimally support the	Partners, Govt	Desk Review
	2.2.10	attainment of programme outcomes? What are key lessons?		
	2.2.24	Partnerships: Do GSHA's Do GSHA's CSO partnerships optimally	GSHA HQ, CO,	KII, FGD,
	2.2.25	support an enabling environment for, and the effectiveness of,	Partners, Govt	Desk Review
	2.1.1	Do activities and outputs translate into planned outcomes/	CO, Partners,	KII, FGD,
	2.1.2	results, thus contributing to programme purpose and goal?	Beneficiaries, Govt	Desk Review
	1.3.1	Can programmes demonstrate examples of good practice in	Partners,	KII, FGD,
	2.2.4	scaling up?	Beneficiaries, Govt	Desk Review
6. Strategy/ Programme Sustainability	2.2.15	Can programmes demonstrate examples of good practice in	CO, Beneficiaries	KII, FGD,
	-	beneficiary access to quality services?		Desk Review
	2.2.15	Are there variations across programme locations, including	Partners,	KII, FGD,
	-	innovative approaches to local contexts?	Beneficiaries, Govt	Desk Review
	-	Are there any unintended positive or negative achievements?	Partners,	KII, FGD,
7. Present findings and conclusions	2.2.16	What were the benefits and challenges associated with the	Beneficiaries, Govt	Desk Review
	2.1.1	consortium with Farm Africa for the PPA funding	CO, Partners,	KII, FGD,
	2.2.17		Beneficiaries, Govt	Desk Review
	2.2.18	How likely are the activities/results/impacts/benefits of	Partners,	KII, FGD,
	1.2.3	programmes to be sustained (or not) after programme	Beneficiaries, Govt	Desk Review
8. Evidence-based, practical recommendation s for GSHA HQ, Irish Aid, govt. partners, civil society etc.	2.2.20	What are the key factors/constraints that contribute to sustaining	Partners,	KII, FGD,
	2.2.21	programme gains, particularly among co-ops and agri-	Beneficiaries, Govt	Desk Review
	2.1.1	enterprises?		
	2.2.1	What are the results against the strategic plans, results	All groups	KII, FGD,
	-	frameworks and theory of change?		Desk Review
9. Recommendations	2.2.1	What are the results in comparison with past years	All groups	KII, FGD,
	-	What is the gap between what has been achieved and what was	All groups	KII, FGD,
	2.2.21	intended OR what is best practice?	All groups	KII, FGD,
	-	What might have happened in the absence of GSHA support?	All groups	KII, FGD,
	-	What are the positive changes and how do stakeholders say they	All groups	KII, FGD,
10. Conclusions	2.2.21	can be sustained?	All groups	Desk Review
	2.2.9	What are the priorities for GSHA's future programming for the	All groups	KII, FGD,
	2.2.19	future, including replication of good practices/initiatives?	All groups	Desk Review
	2.2.9	Propose strategies, processes, tools & requirements for	All groups	KII, FGD,
11. Recommendations	2.1.3	implementing these priorities, particularly with respect to	All groups	KII, FGD,
	2.1.3	externalities that may affect future programming	All groups	Desk Review
12. Conclusions	2.1.3	How can partners in governments and civil society (notably Irish	All groups	KII, FGD,
	2.1.3	Aid) support future programming.	All groups	Desk Review

Annex 2 – Documents Consulted

Agricultural Policy Paper (2012); Self Help Africa, Ireland

Ausward Zidana (2014); M99 Programme Report End of Year 2013; Self Help Africa, Malawi

Development Assistance Committee (1991) DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance, OECD, France

Fasil Kelemwork (2014); E99 Programme Report End of Year 2013; Self Help Africa, Ethiopia

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Gorta-Self Help Africa (2014); Post Merger Interim Programme Strategy, Ireland

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Gorta-Self Help Africa (2015); Management Report Quarter 1, 2015, Ireland

Guide for Gender and Inclusion (2015); Self Help Africa, Ireland

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John Seaman, Celia Petty (2012); Individual Household Method and the Household Economy Approach: A Manual; Evidence for Development, Ireland

Kirsty Wilson, Courtenay Cabot Venton, Peter Ngoma (2014); Enhancing Community Resilience Program: Mid-term Evaluation – Assessment of Programme Value for Money; LTS International, baastel, CDM, United Kingdom

Lawrence Munthali (2015); M99 Programme Report End of Year 2014 – Malawi

Linking Nutrition and Agricultural Production (2012); Self Help Africa Policy Document, Ireland

Mancuso-Brehm (2001) Promoting Effective North-South NGO Partnerships, INTRAC

Part 1: PPA Annual Report (2014); Farm Africa and Self Help Africa Consortium, Ireland and UK

Peter McEvoy, Susan Fraser, Maire Ni Chriostail (2014); Uganda Monitoring Visit Draft Report, Irish Aid, Ireland

PPA Annual Review Reporting Year: 2012/2013 (2013); Farm Africa and Self Help Africa Consortium, Ireland and UK

Self Help Africa (2014); Programme Funding Report to Irish Aid 2013, Ireland

Self Help Africa (2011); Country Strategic Plan for Ethiopia 2011-2015, Ireland

Self Help Africa (2011); Country Strategic Plan for Malawi 2011-2015, Ireland

Annex 3 – Stakeholders Interviewed

GSHA Program and Strategy Evaluation – Contacts and Interviewees

The following is a list of people that were interviewed in person or remotely during the GSHA evaluation. The interviewers were the ISG evaluation team of John O’Connell, Brian O’Callaghan, and Karishma Budhdev-Lama.

Contact and Interviewee List			
Name	Position	Organization	Contact information
GSHA Head Quarters			
Ray Jordan	CEO	GSHA-HQ	Ray.jordan@selfhelpafrica.org
Peter McDevitt	COO	GSHA-HQ	Peter.mcdevitt@selfhelpafrica.org
Isabella Rae	Director of Policy	GSHA-HQ	Isabella.rae@selfhelpafrica.org
Orla Kilcullen	Interim Programs Director	GSHA-HQ	Orla.kilcullen@selfhelpafrica.org
Pietro Carpena	Senior Agriculture Advisor	GSHA-HQ	Pietro.carpena@selfhelpafrica.org
Wilm Van Bakkum	M&E Advisor	GSHA-HQ	Wilm.vanbakkum@selfhelpafrica.org
Mary Sweeney	Gender and Social Inclusion Advisor	GSHA-HQ	Mary.sweeney@selfhelpafrica.org
GSHA Field Staff			
Tony Kisadha	Country Director	GSHA-Uganda	Tony.kisadha@selfhelpafrica.org
Rebecca Amukhoye	Country Director	GSHA-Kenya	Rebecca.amukhoye@selfhelpafrica.org
Radhika	Finance Manager	GSHA-Kenya	
Kalongo Chitengi	Country Manager	GSHA-Zambia	Kalongo.chitengi@selfhelpafrica.org
Zarina Douglas-Sori	Regional Director	GSHA-West Africa	Zarina.douglassori@selfhelpafrica.org
Georges Bazongo	Head of Programs	GSHA-West Africa	Georges.bazongo@selfhelpafrica.org
GSHA Ethiopia			
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Fasil Kelemework	Head of Programs	GSHA-Ethiopia	fasilkw@yahoo.com
Samrawit Tadesse	Head of Finance	GSHA-Ethiopia	Samrawit.tadesse@selfhelpafrica.org
Yibeltal Asmare	Program Manager	GSHA-Ethiopia	
Moges Gobena	Project Manager	GSHA-Ethiopia	Mogy2007@gmail.com
Rahel Abebe	Nutrition and Gender Advisor	GSHA-Ethiopia	Rahelabebe2@gmail.com
Tewodros H/Mariam Abera	Project Manager	GSHA-Ethiopia	Hmariam_h@yahoo.com
Belew Damene	Project Coordinator	GSHA-Ethiopia	Belew.damene@selfhelpafrica.org
Getachew Minas	M&E Officer	GSHA-Ethiopia	Getachew.minas@selfhelpafrica.org
Alehegn Abay	Project Officer – 2	GSHA-Ethiopia	alehegnabay@gmail.com
Ethiopia Partners, Stakeholders, and Beneficiaries			
Aileen O’Donovan	Deputy Head of Development	Irish Aid	Aileen.O’Donovan@dfa.ie
Leulseged Asfaw	Agriculture and Livelihood Senior Program Manager	Irish Aid	Leulseged.Asfaw@dfa.ie
Yitbarek Semeane	Director – Seed	Agricultural	Yitbarek.semeane@ata.gov.et

	Program	Transformation Agency (ATA)	
Mersha Tesfa	CBSP Project Manager	Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA)	Mersha.Tesfa@ata.gov.et
Hayaatoo Duubee	Union Manager	Raya Kachawa Farmers Cooperative Union - Kofele	
	General Manager	Abarash Dairy Farm - Hawassa	
	Owner	Abarash Dairy Farm and Milk House - Hawassa	
	Manager	Edget Seed Production Farmers Union - Butajira	
	Technical Director	Edget Seed - Burajira	
Mr. Awel	Chairman	Zerfeya Primary Seed Cooperative (under Edget)	
	Manager	Yenetsanet Fana Savings and Credit Cooperative - Butajira	
Marc Steen	Chief of Party	USAID's AGP-LMD, by CNFA	
Tedele Gelan	Deputy Chief of Party	USAID's AGP-AMDe by ACDI-VOCA	
Mesfia Kassa	Planning and Program Coordinator	Emmanuel Development Association (EDA)	
GSHA Malawi			
Amos Zaindi	Country Director	GSHA-Malawi	Amos.zaindi@selfhelpafrica.org
Lawrence Munthali	Head of Programs	GSHA-Malawi	Lawrence.munthali@selfhelpafrica.org
Tawina Sukasuka	Head of Finance and Administration	GSHA-Malawi	
Endrina Maxwell	HR and Administration Manager	GSHA-Malawi	
Ted Nyekanyeka	Program Coordinator – M&E	GSHA-Malawi	
Tendai Mayani	Program Coordinator – Gender and Nutrition	GSHA-Malawi	
Peter Soko	Program Coordinator – NRM, agriculture	GSHA-Malawi	
Madalitso Chidumumos	Program Coordinator – agribusiness	GSHA-Malawi (resigned 6/17/15)	
Isaac Sangweni	Project Manager – DISCOVER	GSHA-Malawi	

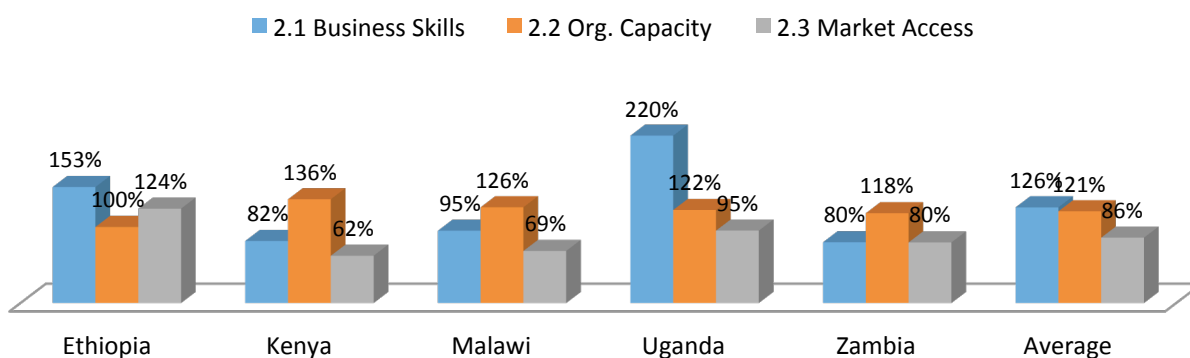
Innocent Dula	Project Officer – DISCOVER, VSL	GSHA-Malawi	
Richard Nyoni	Project Officer – DISCOVER, M&E	GSHA-Malawi	
Lovemore Chikalenda	Development Facilitator – FEDFES Lilongwe	GSHA-Malawi	
Malawi – Partners, Stakeholders, Beneficiaries			
Aidan Fitzpatrick	Head of Development	Irish Aid	Aidan.fitzpatrick@dfa.ie
Lovely Chizimba	Vulnerability Advisor	Embassy of Ireland	Lovely.chizimba@dfa.ie
Stella Kankwamba	Director, Agricultural Extension Service	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development	skankwanba@yahoo.co.uk
Senard Mwale	DISCOVER Program Manager	Concern Universal	Senard.mwale@concern-universal.org
Sydney Khando	Senior Agriculture and Livelihoods Programme Manager	Catholic Relief Services	Sydney.Khando@crs.org
Victor P	Meteorological Officer	Karonga Airport	
Franklin G'mdambo	HR Officer	District of Karonga	
James Tembe	Director of Administration	District of Karonga	
James Chikoya	District Agricultural Development Officer	District of Karonga	
Mzumara	Lead Farmer	DISCOVER	
Febi Gondwe	Chairwoman	DISCOVER - VSL	
Austin	Farmer	DISCOVER	
	Program Director	FOCUS - Karonga	
Agnes	Project Officer for FEDFES	FOCUS - Chitipa	
Anu Kisamu	Field Officer – FEDFES	FOCUS - Chitipa	
Hueves Kaunda	Crop Protection Officer	District of Chitipa	
Stephen JC Nkhata	Acting Director of Planning and Development	District of Chitipa	
Alan Chawinga	Extension Agent	District of Chitipa	
Wallex Mbukwa	Extension Agent	District of Chitipa	
	Manager	Chikondi Cooperative (FEDFES - Lilongwe)	
	Lead Farmer	Chikondi Cooperative (FEDFES-Lilongwe)	

Annex 4 – Evaluation Research Limitations

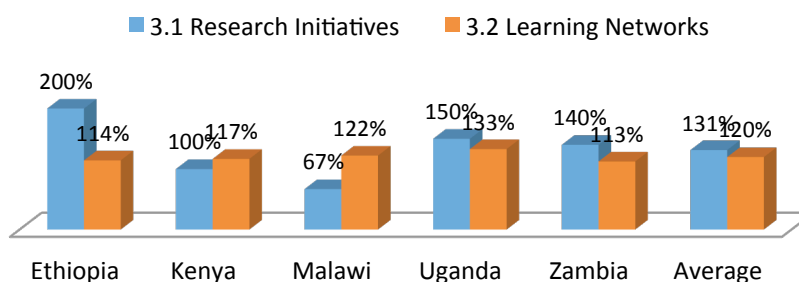
Risk/Limitation	Mitigation
Research was conducted in diverse linguistic and cultural settings that sometimes required interpreters.	Programme staff with understanding of the stakeholders and context of GSHA's programming were used as interpreters.
Time and personnel constraints on the evaluation necessitated the use of a convenience sampling methodology for the field research.	Triangulation of the findings from the field research with data from multiple sources and with desk review data to verify validity.
Some field research had a preponderance of KIIs (vs. FGDs/direct observation) running the risk of bias as well as limiting the participation of other stakeholders (e.g. municipality/NGOs) whose advice would enhance the data collected.	GSMA COs staff and the ISG evaluators attempted to identify a representative sample of informants. Also data was triangulated with the findings from interviews conducted virtually among three additional countries.
Only two countries were selected for field visits, leading to a risk of bias or insufficient data to extrapolate across the organisation	Use of remote methods (telephone interviews) with representatives from other countries and documentary review to bolster the depth of data from the two field-visit countries.
Not all country-level documentation was provided in the time permitted for the research/analysis, limiting the comprehensiveness of the desk review in some settings.	Flexibility in approach to the research at individual country level and on combining individual country data.

Annex 5 – IAPF Programme Performance per GSHA-Reported RBFs

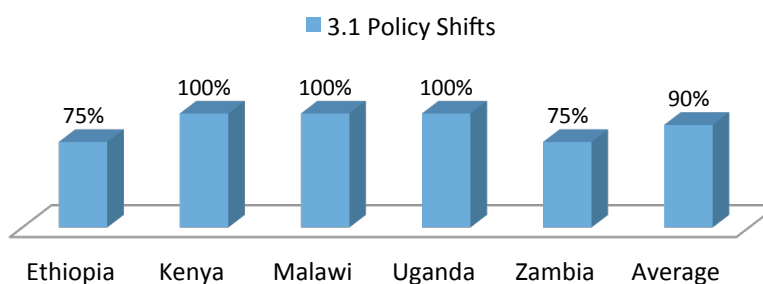
GSHA IAPF OUTPUT 2 Indicator Achievement to 2014 % of targets per indicator reached



GSHA IAPF OUTPUT 3 Indicator Achievement to 2014 % of targets per indicator reached



GSHA IAPF OUTPUT Indicator Achievement to 2014 % of targets per indicator reached



Annex 6 – Value for Money Initiatives Reported by GSHA

Uganda

- a) Effective engagement with stakeholders and beneficiaries in selection of candidate activities, work planning, monitoring and reporting and lessons learning.
- b) Cost-effective implementation modalities,
- c) Sharing of information, financial reporting and audits,
- d) Feedback mechanisms, transparency,
- e) Synchronizing work plan and schedules with those of local governments,
- f) Working through specialized/mandated institutions e.g., in case of micro-finance; micro finance Banks, research institutes, extension agents.

West Africa

- g) Reducing costs as much as possible as a tool for fundraising
- h) Limiting staff numbers
- i) Strengthening monitoring, evaluation and learning functions
- j) Annual internal audits and post programme evaluations

Zambia

- k) Efficient financial and HR procedures and controls.

Kenya

- l) Nonspecific intention to “achieve value for money”

PPA Reporting

- m) Maximising programme effectiveness and impact (as measured via the IHM surveys) leading to scaling-up and thus value for money (economies of scale).
- n) Restructuring and reducing its staffing contingent at head office and overseas (including exit from Eritrea, although this was noted to be due primarily to operating environment challenges) and maximising the resources reaching programmes
- o) Improving administrative/managerial efficiency by sharing knowledge and experience with international NGOs (including PPA consortium partners)
- p) Finding cost-free solutions to disseminating lessons,
- q) Investing in young national professionals rather than international consultants.
- r) Hire of a strategic HR consultant to review the reward and recognition policy and employee satisfaction and motivation
- s) Improved financial management systems, contributing to efficiency
- t) Creation of a technical team that supports all country programmes, who can draw down expertise as required
- u) Use of social audits of private companies across Africa to ensure greater benefits to workers on farms and in factories
- v) Programme efficiency through increasing quality, reducing costs and improving delivery.
- w) In 2013/14 all GSHA senior Finance Staff (Heads of Finance & Administration) from six country programmes received training on SHA’s understanding and approach to VfM. In addition, programme staff were trained in VfM as part of proposal and logframe development training, in order to increase their understanding of how to incorporate VfM analysis and decision-making into programme design.

In addition to the above specific initiatives reported across GSHA's programmes, the following measures were noted in the PPA proposal to be implemented across the consortium partners.

Category	Drivers	Mitigating actions
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition from other agencies • Project locations – e.g. remoteness, environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary surveys • Developing salary scales • Revising HR handbooks with clear policies on benefits, per diems etc.²⁰ • Investment in staff learning & development (e.g. leadership programme)
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflation • Security context • Accessibility of projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust fleet management procedures and journey planning; joint visits by staff • Farm Africa environmental policy mandating a 4 night minimum stay in Africa • Use of Skype, conference calls Salesforce and Yammer
Local office running costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers of staff • Availability and location of suitable accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clustering projects to share office facilities • Sub-letting office space from other charities • Desk planning to maximise space
External services and goods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local market (availability of goods and services) • Donor guidelines (e.g. EU restrictive procurement guidelines) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexing procurement processes to type of expenditure • Utilising <i>pro bono</i> where possible • Rigorous budget monitoring procedures • Procurement policy is embedded in induction procedures

Annex 7 – Field Notes from In-Country Evaluation in Ethiopia and Malawi

Field Work for GSHA Programme and Strategy Evaluation

From June 3 to June 23, Lead Consultant John O’Connell visited GSHA country offices in Ethiopia and Malawi. The opportunity allowed him to evaluate how the programs are being implemented, and the country office’s relationships with donors, beneficiaries, partners, and GSHA headquarters. Below is a listing of the projects and people visited during field visits, with key observations from each.

June 2, Tuesday **Arrive Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

June 3, Wednesday **Discussions with GSHA staff in Addis Ababa**

Introductory meeting with Country Director, Head of Programs, Head of Finance, M&E Officer, Program Managers for STAR, RuSACCO, and CSMP.

The team gave an excellent and wide-ranging briefing. Highlights include:

Overview – SHA started in Ethiopia in 1984. Always has focused on small-holder farmer, but changed from emergency relief work to development of the agriculture sector with the goals of increasing production and linking farmers to markets. In addition to agriculture, the concept of integrated rural development was introduced, which included health, education, and water/sanitation activities in specific localities. SHA Ethiopia was self-managed until 2007, and then programming and strategic direction moved to HQ in Dublin. For first time, a strategy was introduced for 2011-2015, which was closely aligned with the Government of Ethiopia’s strategy for the agriculture sector. SHA Ethiopia works with the mid-level farmers only, and not the poorest of the poor. Also, they have received permission from HQ to continue using the old name (SHA) which would require a lot of bureaucratic effort to change, and would lose branding impact they have developed over the years (as Gorta had no presence in Ethiopia).

Government policy – It was implied that the SHA strategy had to comply with the government’s strategy. Ethiopia supports agricultural development with 60,000 agricultural extension agents, and pays salaries, but often does not have enough resources to support agents and to properly maintain farmer training centers. The government has a Cooperative Law that is 40 years old, and supports the creation of a Farmer’s Union/Primary Cooperative system, and there is also the rule of law in Ethiopia that keeps these organizations operating without fraud and theft. SHA believes the law could use amending. In addition, they assisted in the revised Seed Law in 2013, which was strongly influenced by their work in developing private sector seed enterprises to augment government seed production. Currently, only 30% of the demand for seed is being met, and SHA has been instrumental in promoting the informal, or private market for improved seed. Government policy also is geared at supporting areas with higher productivity, which also parallels the areas of highest population (and political influence). Also, it should be noted that Ethiopia is spending 13% of its annual budget on agriculture, which is well above the MDG/CAADP goal of 10%.

Monitoring and Evaluation – They have introduced the individual household method (IHM) where they develop a food consumption score on an annual basis to measure impact on programs. IHM will survey

50 out of 500 direct beneficiaries, and will produce the food consumption score as well as measuring diversity in foods consumed. The M&E also counts gender participation, but acknowledges that men are the heads of households, and make most household decisions on production and marketing strategies. There also is a natural division of labor, where women are in control of small elevage, and men decide what crops will be planted.

Programs – The team gave a listing, and discussed briefly, all 11 current programs. Currently, 40% of funding comes from Irish Aid. There are 34 staff members of SHA Ethiopia.

Individual meeting with **Country Director Wubshet Berhanu**

We had a good discussion on general themes, since program details were well presented in the team. His goal is to diversify SHA's program areas to add to their expertise in seed cooperative development, cooperative development, and credit programs. New areas may be dairy and livestock, and they have begun a program in the Afar region with EDA for the primary purpose of gaining experience in the livestock sub-sector. This will complement their participation in the USAID funded LMD program. He pointed out, however, that they will not abandon their leadership in the seed enterprise space, and will also look to expand into the area of conservation. His favorite program was the Community Seed Based Production (CBSP) program for the Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA), as it has excellent support from the government of Ethiopia, and has the potential to be replicated throughout the country. His least favorite program was the Building Resilience through Seed and Conservation Agriculture for FAO (the donor), and this is due to FAO's inability to provide inputs and resources in a timely manner.

Individual meeting with **Head of Programs Fasil Kelemwork**

Fasil was extremely knowledgeable of the programs, and has been working in agricultural development for many years, and has been with SHA as head of programmes for the last 5 years. His favorite program is also the seed program mentioned by the Country Director. However, his least favorite program is the pastoralist pilot program in Afar because it is only 18 months in length, has too ambitious of an agenda for the time period, and he believes there is some corruption involved. He also thinks the FAO program could be good once it gets going, and acknowledged a poor start. Dealing with partnerships is a major aspect of his job, as there are government partners and implementing partners. Areas that he would like to expand into include more rural development, such as honey, which includes other aspects of value chains beyond production. In addition, he would like to see their seed work expand geographically within the country, and thinks this could be a good source of new funding. In general, the HoP was very knowledgeable, forward thinking, and strategic, and is providing a high level of strategy and management to SHA programs in Ethiopia.

Individual meeting with **Head of Finance Samrawit Tadesse**

Samrawit has been with SHA for 5 years, and came from SNV. She handles all budgeting and budget reports, except for Irish Aid funded programs, which is done by HQ. Ethiopia has very intrusive laws for NGOs, and one is that Admin costs must be kept at no more than 30% of the budget of a project.

Unfortunately, the interpretation of what is an administrative expense is very generous, and it is always difficult to make it under this level. The government even enforces this limit through an approval process of all budgets that must go through the Charities and Societies Agency (CSA) that is directly under the Prime Minister's office. This makes it difficult to afford new vehicles and equipment, since they must come under the cap. The CSA also requires a 3 year plan for SHA, to renew their operating certificate. In general, monthly payments are processed well by HQ. However, the HoF noted that deadlines for budget items are getting shorter and shorter, support from HQ is diminishing, and a cooperative attitude has been replaced with a more non-collegial attitude. A big change was noted after March of last year. She has also undertaken a recent salary and NGO survey to ensure that SHA salaries and benefits are in line with what other organizations are providing. The results showed that they are in the middle of what others provide, and that they need to continue to adjust salaries to inflation rates in addition to providing bonus salary rates. Finally, she believes SHA should diversify programs to include value chain work, and also continue to diversify in terms of partners.

June 4, Thursday Road to Hawassa, with visits to SMART project sites in Meki Batu and Dodola

On the way to Hawassa, we visited two farmer's unions that were supported under the SMART program which finished in December 2014. GSHA has been supporting these two unions since well before the SMART program, and continue to support them informally. GSHA/Ethiopia thought it was important to include these projects in the evaluation because they are very proud of the impact they have had, and the reputation for technical leadership in developing successful seed cooperatives.

Visit to **Meki Batu Fruit and Vegetable Farmer's Cooperative Union**

We visited the farmer's union, but there was no leadership or beneficiaries to talk to. Meki Batu was part of the SMART program, which closed down at the end of 2014, and was a client of Program Coordinator Belew Damene.

SHA has been working with this farmer's union for over 10 years, and helped them grow to the point where the farmer's union has 67 primary cooperatives with a total membership of 4,600. Currently they provide no support, but the purpose was to show me how long term assistance produces strong and sustainable cooperatives. The primary activity of the union is to provide seeds for maize, haricot beans, Bombay red onions, tomato and papaya. In addition, the FU supports mechanization, provision of other inputs, marketing assistance, and farmer training. They are also involved in exporting fresh green beans to Holland. The government's seed or cooperative law states that 10 percent of the seed produced (maize, onion, or beans) must go back to the farmer, with the other 90 percent going to the FCU. The FCU then sells the seeds at a government dictated price, and returns the proceeds to the farmers less costs of input provision, and administrative costs of the FU.

We also visited a 1 ha tomato cluster, which consisted of the land of 4 separate farmers that were all members of one of Meki Batu's primary cooperatives. They all grew tomatoes from seed (not seedlings), and received seeds and fertilizer from the cooperative. The cooperative was also assisting with marketing of the tomatoes at harvest time to either regional or national markets.

Visit to **Raya Wakena Farmer Cooperative Union in Dodola**

Like Meki Batu, Raya Wakena was also a participant in the SMART program that ended in 2014. This FCU started in 2004 with 9 primary cooperatives in 2 districts, and now encompasses 70 primary unions in 4 districts, and has 20,979 members. We met with the FCU's manager, and lead trainer/agronomist. Raya Wakena is also a seed multiplication cooperative, but also participates in grain marketing. The main crop for the FCU is wheat. SHA was the implementer for the Irish Aid funded ACDP program from 2007-2010, until the SMART program started. SHA provided the FCU with training, a seed cleaner, and storage building. The seed cleaner is primarily for members of the cooperative union, but also is used to clean other farmer's seed for a fee. The FCU managed to purchase two large John Deere combines for harvesting, and received a loan from the Cooperative Bank of Oromia that they are on track to pay back in 4 years. In general, they have been able to pay back 70% of annual profits to the membership.

While visiting the FCU facility (offices and storage), they also showed us a Farm Store that was funded by USAID's CNFA and the Commercial Farm Service Program. The FCU had both a well-stocked agro-chemical store, as well as a separate veterinary medicine store, and both had trained staff that could advise buyers on safe and effective use of chemicals/medicines. The CNFA program was provided to a select group of FCU's on a competitive basis that looked at their management ability. I made the observation that SHA's role in making Raya Wakena a strong cooperative union helped them to win the competition to receive a farm store investment from USAID, and that SHA should find a way to account for this valuable additional service, even if SHA was not directly involved.

It should be noted that for both of these FCUs that SHA had a long and instrumental role to play in their formation. The impression from the staff level is that we need to find funds to continue our involvement in these cooperatives development. While development takes years, both of these FCUs seemed fairly mature and independent, and may have graduated to being successful and sustainable entities to support local farmers. This poses two questions for SHA's future deliberations: 1) when do we graduate organizations from development clients to full independence; and 2) how can SHA take credit for both the sustainability of an organization, and their ability to attract additional development funding from other sources.

June 5, Friday Visit to Halaba

We spent the whole day visiting various aspects for the "Improving Smallholder's Food Security through Scaling up of Community-based Seed Production and Multiplication in SNNPR", or CBSP.

Visit to **Cooperative Promotion Office of Halaba Woreda**

We met with Alehegn Abay, the Project Officer for the CBSP project, who is based in Halaba. Alehegn has been with SHA for 7 years, and specializes in cooperative development. He was very knowledgeable about the program, and cooperative formation, and I believe is a great asset to GSHA. He explained that the program works in three areas: 1) Seed multiplier cooperative development; 2) Provide support to renovating a farmer training center; and 3) Support to a woreda-owned nursery. In the Halaba area, he has formed 3 primary cooperatives for seed multiplication, which is a new activity for the area. They work with tef and haricot seed multiplication. The primary cooperatives have been formed and trained by the program, with the goal of producing certified seed for the area, and beyond. So far, they have

trained 1,450 farmers in the primary cooperatives in all three locations. In addition to agronomic training, they have supported the primary cooperatives with development of a business plan, provision of thresher machines, and the SHA-style storage building. In addition to the formation of 3 primary seed cooperatives, the local government is going to expand the program, and form 5 additional primary seed cooperatives using the SHA model, and with the assistance of the Project Officer. After the next 5 are formed, the 8 primary seed multiplication cooperatives will be organized under a Farmer's Cooperative Union, which will assist with marketing, cleaning, and storage of improved seed. Again, the strategy and planning for the Union is provided by GSHA staff, which are located in the woreda's Cooperative Promotion office of the local agriculture office. To provide an example to local primary cooperatives, they have conducted training at the Raya Wakena Farmers Cooperative Union in Dodola that we visited the previous day. This is an excellent example of GSHA using its successfully developed cooperatives to demonstrate the operations and benefits of cooperative formation to new participants.

Visit to Amane Prima Seed Producers and Marketing Primary Cooperative, Iloleica village

This area is facing epic topsoil erosion problems, with seasonal rivers ever widening and exposing bedrock. It is located 45 minutes from Halaba on some nearly impassable roads. We met with the Executive Committee and about 20 additional farmers in a focus group setting. The cooperative has 120 members, of which 20 are women. They are growing both improved varieties of tef and haricot beans, and have 40 ha of haricot and 82 ha of tef under cultivation for seed multiplication purposes. They have had their first harvest, and had difficulty with certification, since untimely rainfall at harvest lowered the germination rate, and 50% of the crop failed. In anycase, the amount produced was not sufficient to export out of the immediate area. The chairman of the committee was asked what activities GSHA had provided to them, and he, with help of the group, provided the following items: 1) original seed supply, which was provided by a loan; 2) training on how to organize as a cooperative; 3) training on seed varieties; 4) seed multiplication as a business; 5) training on agronomic practices; 6) training on the seed inspection process, and lab testing; 7) provided a thresher for harvesting; 8) provided a SHA standard seed storage facility [seed storage facilities provided from SHA all had the same design, and were also painted similarly to expand the "brand" of GSHA]; and 9) recognition of the primary cooperative as a seed supplier to the government. In addition, they have produced an action plan for the next growing season. The seed provided by GSHA came from a government research center. A farmer was asked how he knew the tef seed was improved, and whether he had observed any difference from their normal tef varieties. He respond in the affirmative, and observed a doubling of productivity with the advanced seed grown outside of the multiplication scheme.

Visit to Alemtena Nursery, Halaba Woreda

This nursery is owned and run by the local government (woreda). The majority of the production was for tree seedlings for environmental purposes (erosion control, firewood production). GSHA is utilizing some of the nursery space and staff to raise coffee tree seedlings and desho grass planting material. The coffee seedlings are given to primary cooperatives in the CBSP program, and are sold to individual members so they can diversify their crops and income streams. The desho grass is just beginning, but it is popular with farmers as it provides a hardy ground cover and forage material for small and large

ruminants. In addition, GSHA provided poly tubing for coffee and tree seedlings, as well as hand tools for the nursery staff. While some of this assistance is not strictly within the parameters of the program, it has the benefit of gaining trust and cooperation from the local government.

Meeting with **Tewodros (Teddy) Haile-Mariam Abera** at the **GSHA satellite office in Hawassa**

We met briefly in the GSHA satellite office in the center of Hawassa, which also operates as the regional office for the USAID-funded AGP-LMD project, which Teddy is the Project Manager for GSHA. In addition to himself, there are 4 other LMD project employees that are employees of CNFA (GSHA provides the office as part of their sub-contractor agreement. We discussed current changes in the project as a result of a mid-term review, and they will be receiving up to 10 additional employees to begin new activities in small animal micro enterprises, which will complement their enterprise development work with cooperatives and the private sector. He also mentioned the difficulties of working with CNFA/USAID as there are serious lags in invoicing and payment, and reporting requirements are quite onerous. I was also shown a brief 4 minute video of LMD program activities that are being conducted by GSHA, which was a clear presentation of the activities. The video was done by Teddy himself, and was of his own initiative. Altogether, Teddy is another excellent and motivated example of field staff in GSHA/Ethiopia.

June 6, Saturday Visits to Kofele and Salam Dairy Cooperative

In Kofele, we visited the **Raya Kachawa Farmers Cooperative Union**, which is participating in the “Malt Barley Production & Market Linkage Project”

Note: Kofele is a designated “surplus production area,” and was a very lush and green area – clearly a very productive area. Farmers tend to rotate crops between barley, cabbage, onions, and potato. But average farm size is small, and is generally 1 to 2 ha.

We visited with the Union Manager, Hayaatoo Duubee, who has overseen the growth of the FCU from 26 primary cooperatives with 6,120 farmers to 37 primary cooperatives with 10,325 farmers. The original 26 primary cooperatives broke off from a larger FCU in Shashemene (30 km away) to focus exclusively on the Kofele woreda. He explained that the GSHA program started in 2012, and they were provided with an in-house expert (GSHA Development Facilitator) who assisted with management training and to identify gaps in marketing and storage. In addition, SHA provided a storage facility, seed cleaner, and a motorcycle. SHA also helped the FCU set up a Guaranty Cooperative Fund, which is funded 25% from FCU funds, 25% from GSHA, and 50% from the Oromia Cooperative Bank. This fund allowed them to purchase a harvester and a truck. He was very appreciative of GSHA’s assistance, and in particular in training government and cooperative extension agents to better assist farmers.

The malt barley market is undergoing a rapid transformation. The government of Ethiopia has privatized the beer industry in 2014, sold all five brewers, and is now permitting the private sector development to compete with the previously sole malt producer (Asela Malt Factory), which is a government-run monopoly. The new brewers are now attempting to source malt barley themselves, and are interested in working with growers to raise better varieties, and to improve quality. In addition, malt barley imports are now permitted, and a significant amount will be imported, which could undercut efforts to improve the local malt barley production. Several international brewers are entering the fray, including Heineken and Diageo (makers of Guinness). Raya Kachawa is the largest FCU with producers of malt

barley, and they are facing tremendous market opportunities and challenges in the new and evolving market. GSHA's support is essential in assisting the FCU through the transition. GSHA's Country Director is even assisting in discussions with Diageo on a technical and marketing partnership for the FCU. In addition, the FCU needs to support its farmers with better seed and technical advice, and also is attempting to help the farmers shift more strongly from growing a type of barley for food consumption to malt barley as a cash crop for sale. Malt barley is already the leading cash crop in the area, but the FCU is trying to position itself as a better and more consistent supplier of malt barley to the new private sector brewing industry. However, recently Heineken hired away the GSHA field coordinator that was resident at the Raya Kachawa FCU, and they are looking to replace him.

Currently, the local government agricultural extension agents are not technically sufficient to help FCU's farmers. The FCU's GSHA-trained extension agents are assisting the farmers with extension work for malt barley seed multiplication, which is essential to expanding local malt barley production. The FCU manager is interested in getting a Farm Store, and GSHA will assist him with a trip to Dodola to look at their facility. He would like to copy this concept to provide his membership with additional services. In general, this project is an excellent and essential partnership between GSHA and the FCU at a critical time.

Visit to **Primary Cooperative outside of Kofele**

The primary cooperative is under the Raya Kachawa FCU, and has 399 members, of which 101 are female. The cooperative was organized in 2005 under Shashemene, but joined Kofele when it was created. We talked with the young woman who is the primary cooperative manager, who has received training and support from the FCU, and several lead farmers. They were pleased with the service they received from the Raya Kachawa FCU, which included receiving improved seeds, chemicals, vegetable seeds, fertilizer, and training. In addition, the FCU helped to link them to Heineken as a market for their malt barley. Their biggest need is in better supplies of improved seed for malt barley and vegetables (primarily carrot and cabbage, as they claim the vegetable seed quality is poor). Regarding improved malt barley seed, they stated that supplies from the FCU were not sufficient, and they had to go to the market to purchase sufficient seed. When the group was asked what crop they would like to expand, they all mentioned malt barley as number one, and cabbage as number two.

We were meeting on a farmer's 1.5 ha farm, where he grew cabbage, potato, maize, and false banana (a relative of the banana that produces no fruit, but a large, edible root). The farm was very orderly and well maintained, and it appears the farmer is fairly self-sufficient with his 1.5 ha, which is aided by the naturally productive environment.

In the afternoon, we visited the **Salam Dairy Cooperative** which was south-east of Hawassa, and participating in the "Agricultural Growth Programme – Livestock Market Development (AGP-LMD)"

Under the LMD program, GSHA was compelled to create some dairy cooperatives. We visited the Salam Dairy cooperative which had 10 male members, but added 8 women "because we were told to," and now has 18 members. The dairy was formed in 2012, and was given 3 cross-bred dairy cattle (Holstein crossed with native), which produced a hearty and productive cow. GSHA provided technical and business training, and a proper local-style dairy barn was created with proper drainage. We were meeting with the cooperatives Chairman, Deputy Manager, and Treasurer.

However, the site was in the middle of a town, and was on a tiny lot that could only fit the dairy barn, guard house and manure pit. There was no grazing or outside area available for the cows. The lot was also being rented, and not even owned by the cooperative. All of the feed was purchased on the local market, and they had no capacity to produce their own feed. When asked about costs, it became clear that feed costs alone take all of the income from milk sales. They did not have a clear idea of how much milk was being produced, or how much they sold that week. There is a significant amount that goes to members families, so income may be even less. Given the lack of space and feed resources, this is not a viable business, and should never have been allowed/encouraged to start in the first place. It was made clear that their inclusion in the program was a political decision to improve relations with local officials.

I made it clear to GSHA staff that this is anti-development when you encourage farmers to take on a new activity that has no chance of succeeding. The Salam cooperative was managing the cows quite well, and its members were enthusiastic. They could use more assistance in understanding the business side of things. But without the basic resources necessary (land, feed), it is difficult to see how this activity will add to the member's income. As a result of seeing an unviable project, the GSHA Project Manager insisted on showing me another project the next day.

June 7, Sunday Visit to Abarash Dairy Farm, Hawassa

The privately owned **Abarash Dairy Farm** is also participating in the AGP-LMD program

We met first with the General Manager of the Abarash Dairy Farm, which is located on the edge of Hawassa city, and is located on half of a hectare. The farm started in 1979 with one cow, which was meant for home consumption. The farm now has 49 cows, of which 14 are lactating. The cows are all cross-breeds, and produce 12 to 16 liters of milk a day. The farm is a vertically integrated operation, with a leased field for feed production (and six dedicated workers to manage that), to a dairy barn, grow-out operation (for male calves), and a retail outlet for the sale of whole milk, yogurt and a tangy Gouda-style cheese. They are planning to add another grow-out operation to purchase male calves to raise for meat production, and are thinking of adding a slaughterhouse/meat production facility to supply supermarkets. Unlike the previous smaller dairy, feed costs are about 35% of monthly income through the retail outlet. GSHA has assisted the dairy with management training, clean milk handling techniques, feed calculations, and have provided field trips to model farms. The dairy has 26 workers total, which does not include the employees of the Milk House, which is the retail store at another location near the center of town. They also make money from manure sales, and the operations are supplemented by a bio-gas production facility.

We visited the Milk House, and met with the owner of this woman-owned business. She recounted how she originally got one cow to feed her five children. The business grew organically over the years. Currently, she has no marketing problems, and all of the milk and milk products sells out through her one Milk House. This retail outlet also allows her to retain maximum revenue from the milk production. The facility was clean, and had a menu that included non-dairy food items in addition to the milk and milk products. Her goal is to get to 250 head of cattle, but does not have a firm plan of how to get there. The biggest limitation is land, which was apparent from visiting the dairy. She acknowledged that finding land is a precursor to her planned growth to 250 head.

In general, this is an excellent way for GSHA to assist a private firm with growth plans through the AGP-LMD program. It was a necessary counter-balance to the activity that was viewed the day before.

June 8, Monday

Travel to Butajira; Visit to Edget Seed Production Farmer's Union

Visit to **Edget Seed Producer Farmer's Union**, which was also part of the completed SMART program that finished in December 2014. GSHA's relationship in forming this cooperative go back 10 years, and was also presented as an example of GSHA's work over the years.

We met with the Manager and Technical Director of the Edget Farmers Union, which focuses exclusively on seed multiplication for wheat, tef, and fava beans. There are 18 primary cooperatives that belong to the Union, and there is a total of 1,138 individual members. Farmers need to have a minimum of 0.5 ha that they can dedicate to seed production, and the farmers are encouraged to cluster their production together so that there is less cross-contamination. GSHA had a major hand in developing and training the Union under the 5-year SMART program, which ended at the end of 2014. GSHA provided 13 storage facilities at 13 primary cooperatives, plus the main storage unit at the Union headquarters. In addition, GSHA helped with building a seed laboratory, provision of equipment, and tremendous amount of training. The seed lab does primary testing for primary germination, and acts as a pre-test before seeds are sent to government labs for formal certification.

This project has been one of the first and most successful seed multiplication projects in Ethiopia, and acts as a model for replication in other parts of the country. The Edget Farmers Union has also received assistance from other organizations, including the University of Hawassa, the Integrated Seed System Development (ISSD) project funded by the Dutch, and recently the AGP-AMDe project funded by USAID, which is currently building them a larger seed storage facility at the headquarters.

Growing seed for official certification is much more complicated than growing grain for market, since strict standards must be adhered to throughout the growing, harvesting, and processing. In addition, a fairly complicated payment system is in place to both the individual farmers, and to the primary cooperatives, which is also complicated by set government prices that are paid for seed, as currently the intention is to sell all certified seeds produced to the government for distribution. However, under a new law, the Edget Seed Union will be able to sell a percentage of the seed produced directly to individuals, instead of 100% going to the government for distribution. This may change and complicate the market.

In general, the Manager is very appreciative of all of GSHA's contributions to the program, and hopes to have their involvement again. As in the other SMART cooperatives visited, the GSHA Program Manager for SMART was hopeful of future projects to once again work with the cooperatives that GSHA created. Given the success of Edget, and significant interest from both the Government of Ethiopia and other donors, Edget will continue to receive assistance. It might be more productive if GSHA seeks opportunities to replicate Edget in other locations, as they are so well run that they have essentially graduated.

Visit to **Zerfeya Primary Seed Cooperative**

We met with Mr. Awel, who is the chairman of the Zerfeya Primary Seed Cooperative. This primary cooperative is subordinate to the Edget Farmer's Union, and has 98 members, of which 7 are women. The primary cooperative was begun before the Farmer's Union, as the area was identified by Hawassa University as suitable for seed production. Currently, the functions of Zerfeya are to distribute basic seed from Edget, collect seed upon harvest, provide chemicals and inputs to farmers, provide loans to farmers, and handle all of the funds. Previously, Edget handled the finances of Zerfeya, but they now handle all loans and farmer payments themselves. In the future, they would like to buy a truck to transport seeds and satisfy other member needs, purchase a seed planter, and buy a harvester. To obtain this equipment, they will seek funds from Edget Farmers Union, or seek bank financing with the assistance of Edget. Zerfeya has a standard-issue GSHA storage facility that is used to collect and store seed in season. They also rent out storage space to Edget, which pays Zerfeya for the privilege. This is also feasible since they are located only a few kilometers from Edget.

Visit to **Azemache Suffere village**, which has a cluster of 15 members of the Zerfeya Primary Seed Cooperative.

We visited the farm of Mr. Awel, and saw a field for seed production, which consisted of a cluster of 15 farmers that all plant wheat or tef for seed production simultaneously. We visited a field across from Mr. Awel's farm, and saw that although the field was contiguous, various patches were managed differently. We talked with two farmers that are part of the cluster, and each had .25 ha within the larger field, and pointed out their plots. When asked whether they preferred to plant tef or wheat, they responded wheat. Their rationale is that tef seed has a higher price, but wheat has higher productivity, and pays more overall. I asked what one farmer would like from the primary cooperative, and he listed in order: 1) water pump to bring river water up to his land to get a second crop; 2) training on technical farming techniques; 3) wants other varieties of wheat, and also improved vegetable seeds; and 4) better access to loans. He stated that the sale of seeds accounts for half of his income. Finally, he did say he was very happy to be a member of the cooperative and the farmer's union. The second farmer agreed with the needs of the first farmer, but stated that if he had a water pump, he would grow chat, which is the narcotic plant that produces valuable leaves for chewing and export to other countries. Mr. Awel also offered that chat is a crop with a lot of opportunity and profitability.

Visit to **Edget Seed Producer Farmer's Union storage and seed cleaning facility**

After the visit to the village, we returned to the Edget Seed Union to look at the cleaning, bagging, and storage operation. A giant seed cleaner from Germany was in operation, and seeds were being cleaned, bagged, and inspection certificates were being sewn on the bags. The manager also pointed out where the new USAID funded storage facility was going in. Actually, he did not offer who was building the facility until I asked, but it is going in on a 60/40 cost share (60 – USAID, 40 – seed union). In addition, they are getting significant funding from the Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA), which is a quasi-independent government agency. Sell More 4 More is another program that provides TOT training for farmers on post-harvest handling, and also financing to make credit available to farmers. I asked why the cleaning and bagging was going on so late after the harvest, and just weeks before seed needs to be distributed, and he did not seem to think it was out of the ordinary. So it seems there could be better management to get the seed tested and certified in a more timely manner so that the distribution of seed to farmers is not compromised.

Despite an embarrassment of riches regarding donor support, the manager re-iterated that GSHA was essential to the success of the Union, and they strongly wish to work with GSHA again. GSHA's involvement in creating the Edget Farmer Union for seed multiplication is clearly a tremendous success, and GSHA should investigate ways to capitalize in this success.

June 9, Tuesday Visit to Yenetsanet Fana Savings and Credit Cooperative Union, Butajira; return to Addis in afternoon.

Visited **Yenetsanet Fana Savings and Credit Cooperative Union headquarters in Butajira**, which has been receiving support from GSHA under the "Rural Savings and Credit Cooperatives II"

Accompanied by GSHA Project Manager Yibeltal Asmare, we visited the manager of the Yenetsanet Fana SACCO Union in Butajira. We received a presentation on the statistics of the Union. The Union started in 2004, and was comprised of 10 primary savings and credit cooperatives (SACCO) with a total of 965 individual members, and has grown to 108 SACCOs in 2014 with 16,710 members, 74% of which are women. The Union operates as a bank for the 108 SACCOs, and does not have individual members. However, the Union's function is to support the SACCOs with training and providing credit, mobilize savings, supplying accounting formats, and recently have started providing micro insurance-credit-life. GSHA's role has been in the formation in individual SACCOs, and have supported the Union by paying for one staff member, providing administrative support and a revolving grant fund (admin and grant fund totals 3.25 million birr), MIS system, computers, furniture, and technical training and support.

While going over the numbers, an anomaly emerged in that savings and loan rates have gone up dramatically in the last 3 years. Total savings have increased from 13.1 million birr in 2013 to 32.5 million in 2015, while member ship only increased by 1,760 (to 16,710). In addition, total assets increased from 26.5 million in 2012 to 55.5 million in 2015, and loan disbursement increased from 26.5 million birr to 46.5 million birr in the same time period. Their recovery rate on loans is 98.5%. I inquired about the reason for the big jump in activity, and they reported it was from increased training at the primary SACCO level by GSHA which energized the members to participate at a much greater rate than they had previously. The Manager also stated that some high profile, larger loans were given out, which encouraged a higher level of saving. Altogether, this is a phenomenal result from GSHA's actions, and should be better publicized.

The Manager also discussed his challenges, including a low level of financial literacy of SACCO members. Another limitation is the funding gap for loans, which is currently 20 million birr less per year than is available. He also mentioned problems with the governmental auditing agency, which is performing poorly. Finally, he would like to see a greater range of available financial products, and would also like to increase membership. In his strategic plan for the next five years, he would like to increase membership (but not the number of SACCOs), get the asset level to over 120 million, expand the financial products available from the current 3, and expand insurance products.

Visited **Bui SACCO**, which is a primary cooperative under the Yenetsanet Fana Savings and Credit Cooperative Union.

We met with all of the board members of the SACCO, including the chairman, secretary, finance/bookkeeper, treasurer, vice chairman, and several members. In addition, the paid staff was

present, which included a chief, bookkeeper, and accountant. The SACCO started with 27 members in 2005, and now has 545 members. In 2012, the level of savings in the SACCO was 163,000 birr, but now it is 3.4 million birr (as with the Union, and incredible increase). Loan sizes from members go from a minimum of 5,000 birr to a maximum of 600,000 birr. Some of the loans have been going for bigger items, such as vehicles, but most are much smaller and support agricultural activities. Although some loans go for consumption, most are for investment.

Visited with beneficiary A to discuss the benefits of membership in the Bui SACCO.

Farmer A received a loan last year for 13,000 birr to support his agriculture production, and cattle trading. It served as a cushion throughout the year, and supported his trading and agriculture production activities, but also served to maintain consumptive activities when needed (school fees, etc.). He could not tell me exactly what he made as a result of the loan, but knew it was very helpful. So I asked what did he have at the end of the year that he did not have at the beginning. He reported that he had purchased one additional oxen for 7,000 birr (which he leased out to others for plowing and made money from), and built a new house with a corrugated roof that cost him 15,000 birr. Therefore, his 13,000 birr loan improved his life by 22,000 birr worth of productive livestock and improved housing. This year he is planning to take out a loan of 29,000 birr to capitalize his cattle trading business, and add cattle fattening to the mix. His intention is to pay the loan off early, and save on the 15% interest that the SACCO charges. In the future, he would like to see more types of services available, and an increase in loan size.

Visited with beneficiary B to discuss the benefits of membership in the Bui SACCO

Farmer B who was a priest in addition to farming and other economic activities, received a loan for 350,000 birr to purchase a 12-passenger mini-van to do the Butajira-Addis run. Part of his rationale was to provide a job for his son in his 20's to keep him out of trouble. He received his loan in December 2014, and it is for 2 years at an interest rate of 15% a year. To date, he has already paid back one-third of the loan amount, which is ahead of schedule. He did have to present collateral to get the loan, which consists of a house in town he owns, as well as the vehicle itself. In terms of other services he would like from the SACCO or GSHA, he would like more training in financial management, and would like to continue to have access to large scale loans. Currently, he is paying his loan back through receipts from the taxi service, but it is also augmented by other agriculture business.

June 10, Wednesday: Visit Debere Berhan area for “Sustainable Transformation of Agricultural Resources Program (STAR)”

We took a day trip north of Addis to visit the STAR project, and I was accompanied by Program Manager Moges Gobena. The program is a short-term project to provide a wide range of interventions to improve the livelihoods of the most vulnerable people in a defined area. This project is in stark contrast to GSHA's overall stated objectives, and other activities viewed in Ethiopia what work with other than the most vulnerable. The project was notable in its breadth (but not its depth...), with the creation of 7 coops for sheep rearing, 5 groups for sheep fattening, 5 irrigation groups (each with one pump), artificial insemination, apple production, seed multiplication for wheat and barley, SACCO activities, and livestock value chain improvement for dairy. The project is only lasts for 2 years, so it is difficult to see what

sustainable impact it may have, although the individual beneficiaries are grateful for any assistance in this fairly neglected area.

Visit to an irrigation project

The project was in a small village that was not connected to the main road by any type of road, but was along an intermittent river. The farmers there grow wheat and barley for local consumption, and the addition of water pumps allows them to get a second crop, and greatly improve productivity. A group was organized around a single, portable pump with an agreement on watering schedules, and each member is responsible for purchasing the fuel for the diesel-powered pump when it is his turn. The pump can irrigate a total of 25 ha, but only 15 ha is currently under irrigation. This is the first year for the project, and in addition to the pump, GSHA has also provided training, potato seedlings, and vegetable seeds. The participants were very grateful for the assistance. These villagers were visibly poorer than any of the other farmers visited in the southern part of the country.

Visit to Nesritrign village for small ruminant production project

GSHA has instituted a small ruminant production project, and have introduced a better breed of sheep, which is the Dorpa sheep from South Africa. The project consists of providing 5 male dorpa sheep that are given to five separate groups of farmers so that it can breed with the local variety. So far, there have been 45 offspring from the original 5 rams. 70 percent of the group members are women, and we were shown the results by the woman chairman of one of the groups. We had a sheep lifting demonstration, where the smallest children would lift up the largest struggling sheep. They were clearly grateful and happy for the sheep project. In addition, GSHA provided some training in improved animal production, and on providing better feed sources for the sheep. The chairwoman noted that they really appreciated the training, and would like more.

Visit to Nano Mandida Cooperative

This is a multi-purpose cooperative with 500 members outside of a modest-sized town of Mandida. GSHA built a standard-issue storage facility for the cooperative, and I was pleased to see wheat seed inside from the Edget farmers union in Butajira. Nano Mandida is one of 7 multi-purpose cooperatives that GSHA is working with on the STAR project, and each cooperative provides members with fertilizer, seed and other inputs, and also assists in marketing with the produce. GSHA also provides training to the farmers of the cooperatives. I asked how many beneficiaries were there in the Nano Mandida cooperative, and the answer was 100. I asked why they did not count all of the cooperative members (500), since they would all be beneficiaries of the storage facility. The response was that they were only able to provide improved seed to 100 of the members, so they only counted the 100. I noted that they may be undercounting the impact of GSHA activities.

June 11, Thursday Visit to donors and partners in Addis, plus GSHA debriefing

Visit with **Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA)**

I was accompanied by Country Director Wubshet Berhano to visit the ATA's seed division, where we met with Director Yitbarek Semeane and Mersha Tesfa, who is the manager of the CBSP project, which GSHA is implementing. We discussed a recently passed Seed Law (2013) that was facilitated by the ATA, and

are now in the process of developing a strategy to implement the Law. The law covers three sectors in the seed production area: 1) Farmer to farmer, 2) farmer seed producers (like the Edget cooperative), and 3) formal sector, i.e. government sector that provides 35% of the demand for improved seed. The ATA's goal is to build up the intermediate sector (farmer seed producers), and have partnered with GSHA in this sector. This is a big switch for the government, which previously only supported the formal (government) sector. A goal of the strategy is also to formalize and regularize the seed cooperative sector. The ATA has partnered with GSHA because of their leadership in cooperative development, and because of their success with the Edget Farmer's Union. The Community Based Seed Production project, which we viewed in Halaba, is a three year project that is being implemented by GSHA, and they have been pleased with the results so far. They are satisfied with the CBSP that provides farmer training on seed production techniques, and provides seed cleaners, storage facilities, and certified seed. The ATA intends to continue expanding seed cooperative development activities through pilot projects around the country, and are currently funding the CBSP and one other large program. It was clear from the meeting that GSHA is in a good position to assist ATA in expanding seed cooperative development.

Visit with Irish Aid

I met independently with Aileen O'Donovan, Deputy Head of Development for Irish Aid/Ethiopia, and Leulseged Asfaw, who is the Senior Program Manager for Agriculture and Livelihood. Ms. O'Donovan spoke first, and cautioned that she did not have direct interaction with GSHA's programs because it is funded out of Irish Aid headquarters through its grant facility. Nevertheless, she had a lot to say. In general, Irish Aid HQ is shifting its emphasis to a new One World – One Future philosophy. Part of this new push is to switch to reporting of results (impact) vs. output. In general, she believes most partners are not doing this, and are not adapting. In general, the quality of reporting is poor, and local capacity in the development community is not sufficient, and they have resisted pleas from Irish Aid to improve their staffs. NGOs do not work together, and need to so there is a better sharing of information. Finally, she believes gender work in livelihoods programs is weak. Mr. Asfaw is directly involved with Irish Aid's directly funded projects in Ethiopia, which includes the Climate Smart Agriculture program, which is being coordinated by SOS Sahel, and of which GSHA is a member of the consortium. The CSA program is beginning in 2015, and has not really started as of this date. The program is only for two years, but stated that if the partners work well together, there will be a continuation of funding after the two years. He was also familiar with GSHA, and stated that GSHA is a recognized leader in the areas of credit and seed systems, and is well known to deliver results. He also mentioned GSHA's success in standing up the Edget Seed Union, and assistance in the new seed law. However, he did mention that Irish Aid will be shifting more towards poverty alleviation (possibly such as the STAR program). In terms of future work, he suggested GSHA needs to work on forming a federation of unions to coordinate the efforts of the nascent seed cooperative unions, such as Edget. Another area that GSHA should explore is expanding into provision of seeds for high value crops. Finally, he mentioned that GSHA could have a role in developing productive safety net programs.

[Note: In this meeting, both participants indicated Irish Aid may be shifting their focus to working with the most vulnerable populations, which is in contrast to where GSHA's strategy has been to focus on more able farmers, cooperatives, and agribusinesses. In addition, please note that comments from the Deputy Head were general, and not directed at GSHA.]

Visit with CNFA

I was accompanied by Country Director Wubshet Berhanu to visit Marc Steen, who is Chief of Party for the USAID-funded Agricultural Growth Program-Livestock Market Development (AGP-LMD) which is being implemented by CNFA. GSHA is a partner in the program, and is working in the Hawassa area to build up markets and business for livestock. Mr. Steen noted that GSHA is considered one of their better partners, that they have excellent collaboration, that GSHA takes initiative (noted the development of the video by the GSHA Program Manager that highlighted their activities within AGP-LMD), and that GSHA was essential to developing good relations with local officials and private sector actors. In fact, he mentioned specifically that the project was having an issue with the SNPPR government, and the GSHA Country Director went down to SNPPR to solve the issue. In addition, he mentioned that AGP-LMD needs to take more advantage of GSHA's integration into the region. The discussion then turned to difficulties in the relationship, and that centers mainly on payment of invoices. Because of a lengthy approval process, and heavy reporting requirements, there has been a great deal of difficulty placed on GSHA, and in particular with GSHA sub-contractors that expect to be paid in a more timely manner. Mr. Steen's point is that GSHA should accept the process, and not complain and try to change it, because it will not change (due to USAID and CNFA procedures). In general, he was not happy with the complaints emanating from GSHA on payment issues, and thinks the GSHA HQ needs to be more understanding and accommodating in advancing funds for project operations and obligations to local partners.

Despite the pointed comments on invoicing, the meeting was positive in tone, and the CNFA definitely sees the value in having GSHA as a sub-contractor. In fact, as a result of the mid-term evaluation of AGP-LMD, GSHA's involvement will increase, and may see the addition of 8 staff members to work in strengthening businesses in the livestock sector.

De-briefing of GSHA staff

Since the Country Director was going to be out of town at a conference on June 12, we convened a de-briefing at the end of the day. Most of the staff was present, and I presented some of the key points of the field evaluations, that were subsequently provided to the Country Director. I first thanked them for their hospitality, and tireless work to permit me to see most of the programs. Several key themes emerged. The first was that GSHA is not taking enough credit for what it does. Examples include undercounting beneficiaries, and having no mechanism to account for assistance provided to beneficiaries after the programs end. Secondly, program size and duration is an area that needs to be worked out with HQ, since there are several small projects of less than two years in duration, and are unlikely to be able to demonstrate impact in such a short amount of time. The other aspect is the expense of administering these small programs, and the pressure it puts on staff, as it takes almost as much effort to manage a 100,000 euro program, as it does a 1 million euro program. Thirdly, the targeted beneficiaries are not in-sync with the GSHA program strategy, with some programs targeting the most vulnerable populations. Finally, I also told the staff that I believe they are all performing at an excellent level, and that the fact that everyone was so competent was unusual.

June 12, Friday Visit with partners and GSHA staff

Visit to **ACDI-VOCA**, who manage AGP-AMDe and work with Edget Seed Cooperative Union in Butajira

I met with Tedele Gelan, the Deputy Chief of Party for AGP-AMDe which is funded by USAID and managed by ACDI-VOCA. AGP-AMDe works in five value chains (wheat, maize, coffee, honey, chick peas), and work in the areas of agribusiness development and marketing. Since 2012, they have been working with the Edget Farmers Union in the areas of market facilitation, introduction of new technology (fumigation, irrigation, warehouse), and capacity building (for small holder farmers in agronomy and post-harvest handling). In addition, they have been working with the Cooperative Bank of Oromia to develop the capacity of 9,000 savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs). In addition, they are allowed to conduct advocacy, since they are associated with the Ministry of Agriculture through the AGP program, which is an umbrella program for several individual, donor-funded programs (LMD, AMDe), and have paid for capacity building trips in the seed sector to Vietnam and Bangladesh, as well as working on development of SACCOs. Regarding GSHA and its role in Edget, they have seen their activities in farmer training through a lead farmer system, and training farmers on post-harvest handling. He also mentioned that some of the equipment provided by GSHA are no longer effective, such as outdated threshers. But he did mention that in effect, with Edget, they are picking up where GSHA left off, and appreciated their early efforts in developing Edget. One additional point he made was the government's Cooperative Agency has been disruptive, and attempts to micro-manage unions and cooperatives. In one egregious case, they fired 85% of coop and union managers in one area, which included many that AGP-AMDe had trained and invested in.

Meeting with M&E officer

I met with Getachew Minas, the M&E Officer. He was very knowledgeable about the methodologies utilized by GSHA, and explained in detail about their sampling method for the output level (IHM methodology), and outcome level, which requires more rigorous sampling at the 90% and 95% confidence levels. He actually conducts a lot of the IHM sampling himself. All 9 GSHA projects are subject to full evaluation, and it all feeds into the results-based monitoring framework. The output assessments are done annually, while the outcome/impact level is only done at mid-term and final evaluations. Again, his dedication and knowledge were very impressive.

Meeting with Gender and Nutrition officer

I met with Rahel Abebe, Nutrition and Gender Officer, who started with GSHA Ethiopia in December 2014. Her role is to facilitate gender and nutrition training, and to monitor awareness levels across all of the projects. She has visited 5 projects so far, and is working to incorporate gender activities into ongoing projects. However, she would prefer to be included at the program development phase to better incorporate gender mainstreaming, but notes that many RFPs do not contain a gender requirement. The same goes for nutrition activities, which also need to be included at the proposal

stage. One other shortcoming with nutrition activities is that they do not include the seasonal aspects that impact nutrition levels, as most of Ethiopia faces a “hunger season” when the previous year’s crops have been consumed, and current crops are not ready for harvest. She seemed very knowledgeable and motivated, and looks forward to increasing her role in GSHA.

Visit from **Emmanuel Development Association (EDA)**, partner on “Semu Robi Gelalo Pastoral Community Livelihood and Food Security Improvement Project (SRG)”

I met with Mesfia Kassa, the Planning and Programme Coordinator for EDA. EDA is a local NGO that began in 1997 with a budget of 10,000 birr, and now has a budget of 180 million birr and a staff of 181. EDA focuses its activities in the Amhara and Addis regions, and have been contracted by a wide range of development organizations including JSI International (US), Water Aid Ethiopia, Canadian Feed the Children, Banyan Foundation, AMRF Association, and Oak Foundation. In general, they run integrated development programs.

The SRG project is a small pilot project that will last only 17 months, and is located in one woreda in Afar province (on the border with Amhara). He noted that the timescale and budget are not sufficient. This is the first time they are working in a pastoralist area, and are doing a wide range of activities designed to improve the livelihoods of pastoral people. The project is also part of a structural change that will encourage pastoralist people to become more sedentary agriculturalists. He also noted that challenges to the project include poorly organized government structure in Afar, and the non-working culture amongst pastoralists. In the SRG project, they have conducted a wide range of activities to improve the raising of livestock, including 1) water and rangeland management, 2) training on management of depleted rangeland, 3) introducing fencing and paddock areas, 4) seedling nursery for forage plants (elephant grass, vetiver), 5) introduction of apiculture, 6) small ruminant distribution (100 total), 7) establishment of cattle crèche for vaccination, and 8) augmenting the animal health service. Mr. Kassa has been very pleased with the cooperation of GSHA, and the project manager is Getachew Minas, who is also the M&E Officer, with assistance from Head of Programmes Fasil Kelemwork. The site is far from Addis (265 km), and they provide GSHA with monthly financial reports, and quarterly activity reports.

[Note: According to the Country Director, the main purpose of this pilot project is to increase GSHA’s knowledge and experience in the livestock sector. Given the other GSHA livestock program in Ethiopia is 200+ km south of Addis, while this program is 275 km north, and given the project manager is the M&E officer (not a technically oriented agriculture program manager) it is difficult to see how the experience will be shared.]

June 13, Saturday	Rest Day
June 14, Sunday	Fly from Addis Ababa to Lilongwe, Malawi
June 15, Monday	Meet with GSHA staff members individually in Lilongwe

Meet with **Lawrence Munthali, Head of Programmes**

Lawrence started with GSHA in July 2014, and came from Irish Aid in Lilongwe. He attempted to explain the program with all of the various management levels and funding sources. His core staff are his program coordinators who manage all of the projects, except for the two largest, which have their own program managers. The 4 program coordinators have a dual role of project management, and providing cross-cutting advisory services. These cross-cutting advisory services include M&E, Gender/Nutrition, Agriculture/NRM, and Agribusiness. Lawrence has also been involved in grant proposals, in addition to closing down small programs that are ending, and starting up new ones. He is also deeply involved in all hiring decisions, often times reviewing 100 candidates resumes for each vacancy. He also has to approve all procurement decisions for all programs. During the interview, Lawrence was called away every 3 to 5 minutes, and the phone rang several times a minute, in addition to the computer going off every minute or so. It was total chaos, and he was pulled away by something urgent after 30 minutes, with another employee coming into the office and putting it best by saying “Lawrence, can’t you just split yourself in half?”

Meet with **Amos Zaindi, Country Director**

Amos has been the Country Director of GSHA for the last 8 years. Although his background is in business, he has become very knowledgeable of agriculture and livelihood projects during his tenure at GSHA. Since his arrival, there has been a constant push to work with larger donors. They have succeeded in working with the USAID-funded CRS program MODES, and the upcoming Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) funded project. With regard to the new project, they have been selected by MCA to support livelihoods activities associated with a new hydro-power station. It is a 1.7 million USD project over 2 to 3 years, and will have components covering promotion of sustainable agricultural practices and irrigation, and natural resources management issues, as it is important to limit/contain fertilizer use, which runs into the reservoir, water hyacinth flourishes, and intakes for the hydropower plant get clogged. This new program is due to start in the next few months if approved, and will require GSHA to hire an additional 8 employees, which would add to the existing 32. Regarding the programs, he believes the DISCOVER program is the best performing. In addition, DISCOVER helped GSHA to grow, and add new technologies they did not work with previously. The worst performing program was the Vito-funded pigeon pea project that was only 12-months in duration in the Balaka district. The initiative came from HQ to work with this group, and they hastily put together a poorly designed project. In general, they felt it was foisted upon them, and the country office never took full ownership of it.

Meet with **Tenday Mayani, Programme Coordinator – Gender and Nutrition**

Tenday has worked with GSHA from 2004-2011, and then came back in 2012. Her background is as nurse, but also received an MS degree in strategic management. In addition to being the advisor on gender and nutrition for all programs, she is the manager of FEDFES/Lilongwe (MC4), Improving Post Harvest Technologies for Increased Food Security among Small Holder Farmers in Malawi (MD9), and Plant Health Systems Support Project (MG2). She is pleased to have managing responsibilities, which came about due to resignations. In terms of her nutrition work, she feels soy projects need lots of help, because it is not popular here, and could have a positive impact on nutrition. She also likes the concept of combining gender and nutrition, and contributing to the GSHA country strategy. In general, she is

pleased with the opportunities GSHA has given her, but is concerned about instability in the organization, and being able to keep her job.

Meet with Peter Soko, Programme Coordinator – Agriculture and Natural Resources Management

Peter started with GSHA on March 25 of this year, and is managing two projects: DISCOVER (MB5) and SLIP (ME7) which is a 3-year project that is just starting and is funded by the Big Lottery Fund. He originally worked at the Ministry of Agriculture, but came to GSHA from the Catholic Development Community where he worked for 3 years. He had a degree in agriculture and environmental science. He is currently working on all of the internal and external reports for his projects, and notes that external reports take precedence over internal ones. He works with Pietro in HQ, who also helped to hire him. He feels Pietro is a good resource that he can contact anytime. He is satisfied with the salary and package he receives, and especially likes the challenge of managing large programs.

Meet with Ted Nyekanyeka, Programme Coordinator – Monitoring and Evaluation

Ted joined GSHA 6 months ago, and has an MS degree in Agricultural Economics. He has a good handle on the M&E, and discussed briefly the results based framework for GSHA, the IHM mechanism to measure impact, which is utilized in FEDFES/Lilongwe and DISCOVER, and the possibility of switching over to IHM from the Household surveys that are currently used in other programs. Data collection is a major issue, where GSHA relies on government extension agents to do the collection, and college interns. In addition to the RBF, he evaluates all of the baseline, mid-term, and final evaluations that are required for each program. In addition, he is managing two programs (not sure which ones), which take up about 75% of his time. Ted is new to the organization, and still enthusiastic. Note: This looks like an impossible workload. Ted was also charged with managing my visit on top of everything else.

Meet with Tawina Sukasuka, Head of Finance and Administration

Tawina started with GSHA in August 2011. We discussed the problem of retention. Tawina noted they are losing 2-3 people every month, and that it is not getting better. She noted they did a salary survey in 2012, and found they were in the middle. At that time, they did a salary adjustment across the board to put them in the 50-75% range. However GSHA policy is to only grant 5% increases in salary a year, even though the inflation rate is running at 24%. Another problem they struggle with is when a project ends, do they keep the staff that was working on it, or let them go. She said the HQ only granted an extension for one person on an exceptional basis. This also could lead people to leave projects early when other opportunities arise. Regarding equipment, most things are fine, except for vehicles. There are not enough, and what there is old and needs replacing. [Note: I was taken to local meetings in Lilongwe by GSHA staff in their personal cars, and they rented a vehicle and driver for me to go to Karonga. By comparison, in Ethiopia I always had a car and driver from the project for either field work, or in-town meetings.] One other issue they had was HQ used to transfer funds every 3 months. That has been changed to every 1 month, and has been causing difficulty. However, she does like the new accounting package they have.

Meeting with **Stella Kankwamba, Director of Agricultural Extension Services, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development**

We had an interesting discussion on the structure of the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Agricultural Extension Service. The structure is both complex, and complete, with a planned level of extensionists down to every locality. It is also laudable that Malawi has exceeded its Millennium Development Goal of spending over 10% of the national budget on agriculture. However, there is a 30 to 40% vacancy rate in the Agricultural Extension Service. This is not due to budgetary constraints, but due to poaching of qualified people by NGOs, and due to many people that do not want to live in a rural area without any urban amenities. She was familiar with GSHA, and had a very good opinion of them. One project they are working on is the MODES project, where they are involving the Ministry of Agriculture in developing the content of the mobile phone based extension information. The Ministry owns the content, and GSHA is facilitating the dissemination of the information with partner Airtel. GSHA also bridged the gap between Airtel and the Ministry, since Airtel was reluctant to work with the government. GSHA gets the government involved in what they are doing, and come with ideas to help. With GSHA's plant clinics project, they are expanding outreach without any overlap. GSHA has been proven to be effective and beneficial. She also believes that GSHA engages qualified staff, but wishes they would have more staff on the ground doing extension work to complement the government extension agents. Note: This was about as good of an endorsement as an NGO can get, and highlights the benefit of GSHA's philosophy of working with governments, and not apart from them.

June 16, Tuesday

Meet with **Lawrence Munthali, Head of Programmes** – continuation of Monday meeting

We discussed the issue of employee retention. He had some ideas including providing non-salary benefits such as a transportation allowance, or fuel allowance, or improving salaries with a 13th check at the end of the year. He noted that the 5% COLA is probably not adequate, since inflation is running over 20%. He mentioned that USAID is the highest paying organization, followed by Save the Children and PCI. So far, he likes his job, and appreciates the level of autonomy he has. He also likes project design, and has designed 4 projects in the last 6 months, while being successful on 3 out of 4. He also is involved in project set-up, which likely requires a lot of contracting, procurement, and hiring. However, he does not have enough time to visit the field, and would like more time for a lot of things.

Meet with **Endrina Maxwell, Manager of HR and Administration**

Endrina is the Manager of HR and Administration, and does all the preliminary work for hiring new people, such as doing the job description, advertising, accepting applications, and pre-sorting the applications. She manages the interview process for the top five candidates. We discussed the turnover problem, and her ideas are mostly financial, with suggesting a 13th check, introducing merit increases, and improving on the 5% annual increase considering the inflation rate. She also mentioned that employees all tend to multi-task, and this is difficult for some to adapt to. Finally, she mentioned that a

recent visit from HQ staff made the public statement that employee turnover is good because it gets rid of deadwood, and this was interpreted by some staff that HQ basically told them to drop dead. While most likely unintentional, it sent a poor signal to a struggling organization.

Meet with **Madalitso Chidumumos, Programme Coordinator – Agribusiness**

I met with Mada on her last day before resigning from GSHA, and leaving to attend President Obama's Young African Leadership program in Washington. She has been with GSHA for 3 years, and had a BS in Agribusiness, and MS in marketing. She is leaving because she does not feel secure in her job. The main reason is that she was hired for an advisory role as the Agribusiness Coordinator, and one bullet point in her job description mentioned that she "may need to assist management." When she started, her role was 100% advisory, and three years later she is managing 4 programs, with her time split between 75% program management, and 25% agribusiness advisory. She has tried to get her job description adjusted, but there has been no response. So she basically is employed under a job description that varies greatly from what she actually does, and this gives her a sense of uncertainty. I also picked up that she really does not like to manage projects, and prefers a more scholarly and strategic advisory role. She did like the people she worked with, and found the new Head of Programmes to be supportive, and good at assigning responsibility.

Note: After interviewing all 4 project coordinators, the result is one PC who prefers management to advisory, one who prefers the opposite, one who has no time to do management, and one who is happy with both. Given the pivotal nature of PCs, this is an area that should be addressed soonest, considering 3 out of 4 have turned over in the last year. I suggest looking at the straight forward Head of Programs and Program Manager structure GSHA has in Ethiopia which is simpler and more effective. It should be noted that managers and advisors are two very different skill sets, and it would be best to hire for one or the other.

Meeting with **Lovely Chizimba, Vulnerability Advisor, Irish Aid/Irish Embassy**

I met with Lovely at the Irish Embassy, and he briefed me on the Irish Aid program. They have joined pooled funding with DFID and the Embassy of Norway to fund the Enhancing Community Resilience Program (ECRP) that is being implemented by two different consortiums. One is led by Concern Universal, and has renamed itself DISCOVER, and it covers 5 districts. One district, Karonga, is managed by GSHA. Both consortiums and all districts follow almost the same model, but there is still good cross learning amongst member. While the program is due to end in 2016, it has been extended by a year to 2017, when it will be replaced by a similar, but larger program. The fact that ECRP has pooled funding allows the Irish Embassy to break the rule that development is run either through the Embassy, or through Irish Aid headquarters, but not both. Therefore, GSHA is getting funded by both in Malawi. They are very pleased with the program.

He is also pleased with the role of GSHA in the ECRP. Their strengths include 1) having influence at the national level on resilience, 2) working at the community level, 3) livestock production, and 4) VSL establishment. They could be stronger in the areas of marketing and agribusiness. But he did conclude

that GSHA is very responsive to providing information, and that he would love to have a direct partnership with GSHA.

Left for Mzuzu, just over half-way to Karonga

June 17, Wednesday

Arrive in Karonga at GSHA office

Meet with Isaac Sangweni, Project Manager, DISCOVER

DISCOVER is a program of pooled funding from DFID (85%), Irish Aid (10%), and the Embassy of Norway (5%). GSHA has three local implementers of the project: 1) FOCUS for Disaster Risk Management; 2) Foundation for Irrigation and Sustainable Development (FISD); and 3) Small Scale Livelihood and Livestock Organization (SSLP). In addition, GSHA directly implements four activities that have all been added after the inception of the program: natural resources management, VSLs, nutrition activities, and stoves. DISCOVER has a staff of 17 based in Karonga, including 3 project officers. The program has 5 outputs for DISCOVER. First is building the capacity of community and district structures to mitigate impact of climate change, which include crop production due to variable rainfall, increased pest load, and environmental degradation. The output for this activity is annual disaster response plans which are based on the annual weather forecast. The second output is building the capacity of individuals to adapt to climate change. This output has the great majority of activities under DISCOVER including a) promotion of higher rainfall crops; b) promote agricultural extension services; c) promote drought resistant varieties; d) promotion of small scale irrigation schemes; e) expand livestock production through pass-on schemes and training; f) nutrition; g) stove promotion, and other low carbon technologies; h) sustainable natural resources management; and i) village savings and loans (VSL). The third output is information sharing on climate change. Fourth is strengthening the early warning system by providing river gauges and training. The fifth output is to strengthen disaster risk activities at the national level through advocacy and lobbying.

Meet with Victor P – Meteorological Officer at Karonga Airport

Victor is the Meteorological Officer at the Karonga Airport, and also runs the District Committee Early Warning System. He assisted GSHA in setting up an early warning system for flooding by selecting the 9 communities that should have rain gauges to warn of flash floods. They also conducted capacity building in the community to create a system of early warning, and purchased cell phones to give to community members that are participating. He also collects rainfall data from the communities. Another output is the production of a hazard map for the whole of Karonga district, which highlights the threats in each area. Victor has been very pleased with GSHA and their responsiveness. He did mention that they got off to a shaky start, and tried to do too much at once. Note: The airport was small, but very well kept up, as it used to get regular commercial service, and also supported the nearby uranium mine.

Meet with **Franklin G'mdambo, HR officer for District Council, and James Tembe, Director of Administration**

We visited district officials that are familiar with the activities of DISCOVER. Mr. G'mdambo was very complimentary of DISCOVER/GSHA since they work collaboratively with the communities and governments, which is unusual for development groups (most NGOs work in isolation). He has interacted with GSHA in most of their areas of activity, but really likes their disaster work. He said GSHA has done a great job working with the communities to increase their preparedness for disasters. GSHA also prepared disaster contingency plans, and mapping of the area.

Meet with **James Chikoya, District Agricultural Development Officer**

Mr. Chikoya has only been here 8 months, but has extensive service as an agricultural development officer. He has a very favorable impression of the DISCOVER program. The key aspects he likes are 1) flexible and respond quickly; 2) Supportive; and 3) diversified in their approach, which mirrors the government agriculture office approach, which also does everything. He also liked the support GSHA gives to developing local extension agents, and that GSHA staff augments areas that do not have local extension agents. The one area he would like to be involved in is the planning stage for upcoming projects, such as DISCOVER, which he understands will be extended and also have a follow on program.

June 18, Thursday

Entire day was visiting beneficiaries and sub projects of the DISCOVER programme.

Visit to **Kamtenthenga Village**

I visited Kantenthenga Village, where a focus group was arranged for 17 members (12 women, 5 men) of the larger of group of 332 households that participate in DISCOVER. The activities include stove construction, VSL, conservation agriculture, livestock (pass-on project), and nutrition activities. They were in the process of making stoves when we arrived, which are clay stoves that use much less fuel than the traditional 3-stone open fire. Several members of the focus group recounted their success with various activities.

Lady 1 liked the VSL project, and it has benefited her a lot with her first loan of 25,000 kwacha, which allowed her to start her fish selling business, along with bean and tomato selling. With her loan, she made enough profit to buy a goat (3,500), buy 5 bags of cement to build a house (33,000), and paid school fees (18,000). She is anxious to borrow another 25,000 when it is her turn. The VSL started in 2012, has 20 members, and a total savings of 200,000. They are keeping the membership small, but there are 10 more that would like to join.

Lady 2 is the chairman of the VSL, and the rules are you must pay back your loan in 1 month. So far, all of the members have had one loan. Personally, she used her loan to buy a 50kg bag of salt, which she sold to individuals. She was very appreciative of the training she received to run the VSL, and the provision of a cash box, and a file box for VSL books. The stove making is part of the VSL's activities, and

members are paid in shares of the VSL, not cash. The more stoves they make, the more shares they receive, and the VSL also acts as the bank for the stove making operation (profits stay in the VSL).

Lady 3 was excited about owning a stove. She reported that with the old open fire system, she had to get 2 head loads of wood every 2 days. Now with her stove, she only has to get 2 head loads every 2 weeks. This is a massive improvement over the claim to an increase in efficiency of 30% that the stove designers claim. She also reports that they feel healthier by burning less wood, not to mention saving twelve trips to the forest every two weeks.

Lady 4 was happy with the conservation agriculture, and the improved maize seed, and the impact of improved mulching. Her yield on her .65 ha maize field increased from 300 kg to 600 kg, and this was even in a drought year. In addition, she noted that it would be good to create a central cooking area for malnourished children

Man 1 also used conservation agriculture, and utilized a pit planting scheme, with the addition of manure. He reported that he had a yield of 350kg of maize on a .1 ha plot of land.

Man 2 liked the goat pass-on program, where he was trained in proper management techniques for goats, and he received 2 goats. His obligation was to pass on 2 offspring, which he has already done. Now, additional goats are his. He also reported that the goat manure was useful for planting.

I asked the group what their very favorite activity was, and the results were: Stoves – 7, goats – 3, conservation agriculture – 2, VSL – 1, and nutrition – 1. In terms of what other activities they would like to see, several said dairy cattle, and one suggested a storage facility.

Note: While all of the activities seem successful and well received, there was no cohesion to the group, and it is not certain what the sustainability will be without any central group structure (cooperative, association, etc.). However, if the success of the individual activities continues to be strong, that may provide the sustainability needed. The stove making was very successful, with over 500 produced so far by the village. It is also reported the stoves are in high demand, and sell out as soon as they are brought to market. The price remains very low at 440 kwacha (just over \$1), and they are considering raising the price to improve returns. It would also be good to do a labor survey of creating the stoves, which require members to bring large amounts of clay up from a valley bottom, to cure the clay in a pit, make the actual stoves, and then to fire them, which will require a lot of fire wood. It may, or may not, be a profitable activity if the members labor is properly valued. But the benefits to stove users is clear both economically and environmentally.

Visit **Lead Farmer training in Uliwa** on main road – Interviewed District Ag officer, Lead farmer in pig pass on program, woman chairman of a VSL, and second pig farmer

Outside of a lead farmer re-fresher training course in Uliwa, I talked with the District Ag Officer. He was most impressed with DISCOVER's irrigation activities, which could permit some farmers to raise two crops a year. He also like the pass-on program for pigs. A breeding sow is very expensive at 20,000 kwacha, but the returns can be very high considering the birth rate. He also mentioned that he would like them to expand to include dairy cows.

Lead farmer Mzumara was very pleased with the refresher course, and there was a lot of new information, such as about new vaccines. He participates in the pig pass-on program, and received a breeding pair of piglets. He liked the two weeks of training he received before receiving the piglets, which covered housing, swine fever, feeding, signs of disease, manure, and operation of the pass-on program. He was designated a lead farmer at that time, and received a bicycle from DISCOVER so that he could more easily visit farmers seeking advice. As lead farmer, he is responsible for 16 other pig farmers, and is responsible for delivering set-up drugs (vaccinations), which are provided for free by DISCOVER. He has had 2 litters of pigs, the first 6, and second 4. His pass-on obligation is 5 piglets, and he has passed on 4, and still owes one. He has sold two pigs to market, and two died from swine fever. He will be profitable after the next litter, when he delivers the last piglet he is obligated for. His goal is to get up to 30 pigs. DISCOVER has also provided him with maize seed, and seedlings for orange and papaya, the latter two being part of a nutrition activity. He also would like to see DISCOVER expand into dairy cattle for a pass-on project.

I next met with Febi Gondwe, the chairwoman of a VSL. The VSL is three years old, and has 27 members (all women), and has a total savings amount of 1.9 million. She received training on how to operate a VSL. The VSL's limit per loan is 300,000, but 50,000 is the average loan size. She took a loan for 150,000 to buy rice to trade, and made 50,000 profit from the rice sales. Most VSL members take loans to start a trading business. They have 6 months to pay back the loan, and she thinks there are about 20 additional women that want to join the VSL. She has lots of plans for the VSL including a large vegetable garden to create more profits for the VSL, and eventually to open a bakery, where she would like technical and business advice from DISCOVER. She also has dairy fever, and would like DISCOVER to expand into dairy cattle. Another area she would like assistance with is to help with marketing of pigs, as there is a 10-member pig cooperative in her village, and two members are also VSL members.

I met with a second farmer named Austin, who also participates in the pig pass-on program. He started with the program in 2013, and received his pair of breeding piglets. His first litter had seven piglets, and he paid back 2 to the pass-on scheme. He sold the other 5, and bought a calf. His second litter all died of swine fever, and the original breeding pair died too. He still owes 3, but hopes that he will be forgiven the debt. In any case, he plans to spend his own money on a breeding pair of pigs, and still wants to continue. He did understand the mistake he made in not separating out sick pigs, and disposing of them properly, so he did seem knowledgeable. He also is a member of a VSL.

Note: Conducting a focus group with a project with 5 separate activities was a daunting task, but ultimately successful. Individual meetings with beneficiaries are preferable, as responses are not made in a public forum.

Meet with **Program Director for FOCUS in Karonga (manages FEDFES in Chitipa)**

FOCUS is participating on two GSHA projects. They manage the Disaster Risk Management component of the DISCOVER project, and also manage the entire FEDFES project in Chitipa. They have worked with GSHA on various projects since 2005. FEDFES has several components, including seed multiplication for soy and fasilus beans; crop diversification; manure making; and marketing through agro dealers. For the seed multiplication, they use a pass-on mechanism, and also employ a lead farmer concept. The FEDFES project is due to end in December 2015, but will continue with VSL support and farmer training

after the project closes (he did not mention funding for continuing the activities). In general, he has been very pleased with the technical and financial support from GSHA.

June 19, Friday

Visited FEDFES program in Chitipa

I was accompanied by Richard Nyome (M&E officer) and Innocent Dula (VSL officer) of the DISCOVER project, and was escorted by Agnes of FOCUS, the Project Officer for FEDFES and Anu Kisamu, a FOSCUS/FEDFES field officer.

Meeting with District Agriculture Officials

We were to meet with the District Commissioner, but she was unavailable. But we did meet with Heuves Kaunda, Crop Production officer for legumes; Acting Director of Planning and Development; Stephen JC Nkhata, Crop Production Officer for plant protection; and a land officer. All lauded the efforts of FOCUS, and Agnes lauded the effort and support of the District government. They stated that FOCUS started the correct way by involving the district government from the beginning, then conducting a livelihood analysis with District agriculture officials, and developing a plan of activities and villages to work with. They also discussed marketing issues for farmers, and want to promote cooperative development with the assistance of FOCUS. They only have one agribusiness officer, and would like FOCUS to provide assistance with more business development officers. In general, they do not have enough resources (ag extension, trainers), and would like more. They also noted that FOCUS fulfills its obligations, and on time as promised.

Note: GSHA was not mentioned once, and the identity of the FEDFES program in Chitipa is associated solely with FOCUS.

Visit to Bupighu Village

We were accompanied by Heuves Kaunda, Alan Chawinga (Extension Planning Area (EPA) Extension Agent), and Wallex Mbukwa (local extension agent, who covers 22 villages and has 20 years of experience), along with Agnes and Anu from FOCUS. Bupighu is 1 hour and 30 km away from Chitipa, and is several hundred meters from the Tanzania border. We began with a focus group in a local church that was overseen by the village chief, and attended by members of two farm clubs – Mkumbilende Club and Mugalure Club. There are currently 257 members in one of the clubs, and each club has its own constitution, and they manage the seed pass-on, help with manure making, encourage each other, and have formed a VSL. These clubs are mother clubs.

The farmers are very excited about the bean pass-on program, and have seen that the new variety that FOCUS has introduced have twice the yield of the old variety of bean. They have rejected the soy, because there is no use or market for it. They market the beans individually in the Chitipa market. Some of the farmers told of the success they had with the profit of their bean sales:

Farmer 1 – bought a pig, and paid school fees

Farmer 2 – bought 3 pigs, and a bag of fertilizer

Farmer 3 – a lady farmer, who had no money, and received a pass-on, and grew 18 20 kg tins

Farmer 4 – also received pass-on, and grew 15 20kg tins.

We then visited the house of a lead farmer in the program. The homes are used for storage of pass-on beans, and the goal is to get to all 257 members of the farm club. He had 6 150 kg bags of beans to be used as pass-on for the next growing season. He raises maize for home consumption, beans for consumption and sale, sunflower to make cooking oil, and tobacco. He did admit that most of his household income comes from tobacco. He also has a calf and a pig. As a lead farmer, he was also given a bicycle by FOCUS. In 2013, they started a VSL. With the first loan, he bought a 50 kg sack of fertilizer.

We visited a second farmer, who also grew beans. He was very happy with the yield, and reports that it is double what he got with local varieties of beans. He grew 190 kg of beans, of which he kept 60 kg for home consumption, and sold the rest. He is not a member of the VSL. He would like assistance with a pump for irrigation to grow crops in the dry season.

Meeting with **Isaac Sangweni, Karonga**

We discussed management issues within GSHA. He reported that the management system is chaotic, and that it is very difficult to manage four project coordinators (Note: He believes he supervises them.) with constant requests for information from every direction. He is pleased with the new Head of Programmes, but feels he is overburdened. Also, he has yet to visit the DISCOVER project in Karonga. Isaac also reported that the Country Director has not visited in a year, but was due to visit the next week. Although Karonga is far from Lilongwe, Isaac would appreciate more involvement from the CO given it is the largest GSHA program, and is due to be extended and will have a follow-on.

June 20, Saturday

Return to Lilongwe from Karonga (8 hours)

Meeting with **Aidan Fitzpatrick, Head of Development for Irish Aid** at Korea Garden Lodge

We had an interesting discussion on the status of agriculture and aid in Malawi. In general, Malawi seems to be hitting a crunch point for climate and agriculture. From 2007-2014, Malawi had surpluses of maize, however the current crop is estimated to be down by 27.7% from last year's crop. The population needing food support averaged 340,000 per year from 2007-2012, but jumped to 1.7 million from 2012-2014, and is projected to rise to 2.3 million in 2015. Therefore, he believes programs that address resiliency and climate smart agriculture are the way to go in the future. He feels Malawi is almost at a crisis point.

He discussed the strategic grain reserve (SGR) for the country. He said that Malawi has many good laws on the books, but they fall down in implementation. This is due to a pervasive level of corruption throughout government agencies. In the SGR, the government pays a high price to purchase surplus grain of around 140 kwacha per kg. However, the farmers are only paid 50 kwacha/kg, and the difference goes to traders. Many of these trading companies are owned by government employees, and profit from sweetheart deals. The government is the monopoly purchaser for maize for all trading purposes, and also is the monopoly buyer and seller of fertilizer. Malawi has the highest price of fertilizer in the region, which are 2 to 3 times higher than surrounding countries, and this is due to self-dealing by officials.

Although not directly involved with the GSHA program in Malawi, he does support the ECRP program, and thinks it is the way to go as it concentrates on resiliency. Irish Aid does participate in funding ECRP, but only provides about 10% of the budget, with DFID providing 85%, and the Embassy of Norway the final 5%. However, he did mention that Amos Zaindi was good to work with, and has been an innovative leader. He pointed to GSHA's new Plant Doctor program, and Amos' willingness to reach out to ICRISAT. In general, he believes Amos is keeping GSHA moving forward. He also like GSHA's emphasis on VSLs because they seem to work, and the participants are mainly women.

June 21, Sunday – Day off

June 22, Monday

Meet with Amos Zaindi, Country Director of GSHA

We discussed policy work that he has been doing. He commented that HQ expects country offices to do policy work, but does not support the COs with any funds to do it. Despite that, he has been working on Malawi's new Seed Act, which is not yet finished, and has also been contributing to the development of a National Agriculture Policy. He has also been supporting an advocacy initiative on nutrition. He has also been showcasing their gender work at public events, and how their programs empower women. Policy work takes 10-15% of his time, and that amount of time for his staff also.

Amos also believes GSHA is considered an innovator, and points to their incorporation of the Lead Farmer strategy in most of their programs, which was piloted 7 years ago upon his arrival at GSHA. He also pointed out their new plant clinic program (Plant Doctor). He believes one key to their success is partnering with the government. Finally, he thinks GSHA has a good reputation in the areas of agricultural extension service delivery, agricultural production, and agribusiness.

Visit to Masumbankhunda village, and FEDFES program (Lilongwe)

I was accompanied by Lovemore Chikalenda, who has been a Development Facilitator with GSHA for 12 years. The project covers 100 villages, and focuses on seed multiplication "groups", and GSHA implements directly without a partner in this area. Unlike the other FEDFES in Chitipa, GSHA partners

directly with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, and does not operate entirely through a local partner (FOCUS). The core of the program is to support a cooperative for seed multiplication for groundnuts and soy. The village is about 45 kilometers from Lilongwe.

Meet with **Chikondi Cooperative manager and lead farmer**

We met with the manager of the Chikondi Cooperative, which works on both production and marketing, and a lead farmer. We met at a Farmer Resource Center, which had a training room, library (for literacy training), and storage facility (actually a re-purposed multi-function room, and not a proper storage facility). There are 1,355 members of the cooperative, and most choose to work in groundnut production vs. soy, because it pays more, and they do not know what to do with the soy (except to sell it to traders from Lilongwe and Blantyre). They also reported that soy is difficult to grow. Groundnut prices are so strong that farmers are replacing tobacco with groundnuts, which is due to a collapse in tobacco prices in 2011-2012. There are two types of members in the cooperative – those that sell groundnuts/soy commercially, and there is a sub-group of 153 members that do groundnut seed multiplication for improved varieties. For seed multiplication, a member must have a minimum of .4 ha, and certified groundnut seed sells for 950 kwacha/kg vs. groundnuts for consumption, which sell at 420-450 kwacha/kg. GSHA has provided coop members with training on agronomic techniques, but the trainers are government agricultural extension agents (that have been trained by GSHA). GSHA has also assisted in marketing, by connecting the coop with the Farmers Union of Malawi, who purchase much of the groundnut production. In addition, GSHA has provided 8 groundnut shellers. They also provide training in gender, nutrition, and NRM techniques. They are both very happy with the assistance they have received from GSHA, which pre-dates the current FEDFES program which runs from 2012-2015. In the past three months, GSHA has introduced VSLs as part of its exit strategy in anticipation of the close of the program in December 2015. The lead farmer also suggested that small scale oil presses would be useful, so that they can make their own cooking oil. For future programs with GSHA, the coop manager suggested the need to build 4 storage facilities for clusters of members; continue supporting technical training in nutrition; and help with transport of commodities (i.e. a truck).

Note: In both FEDFES programs in Chitipa and Lilongwe, VSLs were introduced in the last year of the program as an exit strategy. A new, complex, and sensitive (handling other people's money) activity takes much more than one year of technical advisory services to be effective. In addition, exit strategies should be part of the plan from the beginning, and not slapped onto a program in the last year. The VSL's may be an attempt to appease donors. Both project mentioned that there will be support for the VSL's after the December 2015 completion of the program, as most expect there will be a follow-on project. While the concept of VSLs is good, the point of this note is to question timing and utilization as an exit strategy. By contrast, the DISCOVER program incorporated VSLs from the beginning, and they are working very well.

Visit to **peanut seed harvest outside of Masumbankhunda**

We visited the Coop Manager's groundnut seed production field, which was currently being harvested. He has 4 acres of groundnuts for seed, and it was quite an operation. Two weeks before, a group of

laborers harvested the groundnuts, and left them in big piles to dry, so soil will fall off. At this time, there were 30 laborers separating the groundnuts from the stalks, and they are paid 120 kwacha per basin. It will take the 30 people 4 days to complete this, and the mostly women and children present are managed by the Coop Manager's wife. She manages all aspects of the harvest, and managing the laborers. The fields were bisected by sweet potatoes, which served as a source for lunch for the lady laborers and their children, and were being harvested and cooked right there in the field. The coop manager is very pleased with the returns from the groundnut seeds, but will plant maize on the plot the next season to keep the soil healthy. He also reported that he does not need to use fertilizer.

Meeting with **Senard Mwale, Concern Universal (Lead consultancy for DISCOVER)**

Senard reports that he is very pleased with the performance of GSHA in Karonga, in particular after bringing in Isaac Sangweni to manage, as his predecessor was replaced due to lack of performance. He noted that GSHA utilizes three local partners, which is in contrast to the other partners under DISCOVER, who all do direct implementation. In particular, he thought GSHA was very strong in financial management of its project, and technically excelled in livestock, community organization, and disaster risk reduction. He thought they struggled a bit with low carbon technology, which includes the clay cooking stoves and introduction of solar gadgets. [Note: Stove production appeared to be doing very well, however beneficiaries reported that the solar gadgets (for lights at night, and to re-charge cel phones) were too expensive.] He would definitely recommend working with GSHA again.

In terms of future programming, he mentioned that there will be a follow-on program to DISCOVER that will be funded by the International Climate Fund (ICF) from DFID, and the budget will expand to 22 million GBP from the previous 8 million GBP for the current ECRP program (of which DISCOVER/GSHA is a member). The current consortium has agreed to fully fund the current operation of ECRP/DISCOVER through March 2017, which was scheduled to end in 2016, with an addition of a rate of 2 million GBP per year. This is good news for GSHA, and presents new opportunities in the future. The follow-on program will likely expand to other geographic areas in Malawi, and GSHA could position itself to lead some of the efforts. In general, donors seem to be very pleased with the current direction of the ECRP/DISCOVER program.

June 23, Tuesday

Meet with **Catholic Relief Services, partner in Modernization of Demand Driven Extension Services (MODES)**

I met with Sydney Khando, who is the Senior Agriculture Livelihoods Programme Manager for CRS in Malawi, and the program manager for the Modernization of Demand Driven Extension Services (MODES) program. This program is jointly funded by USAID, DFID and Agra, which is an alliance of the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. CRS is the lead institution to implement the program, and has three partners: GSHA, Mzuzu Caritas, and HNI. GSHA is responsible for developing the content and sensitizing the communities in two geographical areas: Lilongwe and Balaka

(however the program will be national once fully operational, as it is delivered through cel phones). Developing the content is an arduous procedure. GSHA first develops the content for a particular crop by organizing a meeting of experts, and establishing a task force. Then the technical messages have to be approved by the Agricultural Extension Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture. The approved messages are then sent to HNI who turns them into cell-phone ready and comprehensible messages, and then it goes to Airtel to be put on the cel system. So far, two crops have been approved, including groundnuts and maize, but there are 10 other commodities that need to go through the approval process. One key aspect GSHA is responsible for is to conduct farmer feedback sessions to ensure the messaging is correct and understandable. This has been pushed back another quarter due to the departure of the program manager from GSHA (Mada, the Program Coordinator who just resigned). [Note: Sydney did not even know who the manager was for GSHA.] Nevertheless, Sydney had a very good impression of GSHA, and considers them experts in the fields of climate smart agriculture, agricultural extension, and agribusiness. In general, GSHA has been very responsive, and he would be pleased to work with them again.

Meet with **Lawrence Munthali, Head of Programmes, GSHA**

I had a de-briefing with Lawrence, and gave him an overview of my findings. We discussed further some ideas to simplify the management of the programs area. I also discussed my perspective on the efficacy of GSHA's programs, and complemented him on having a motivated and loyal (to him) staff. We also discussed the need to improve the retention rate of GSHA Malawi employees, and how to deal with a vastly expanding work load with the MCA project starting, and extensions and follow-on programs for DISCOVER and FEDFES.

Depart for Airport, 10:30 am, and return to the United States