

**Framework Agreement of the Consortium
SOS Faim - ASTM**

Evaluation report – executive summary



1 Fact sheet (English)

Context	Consortium 2011–2013 signed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the consortium of NGOs: SOS Faim Luxembourg-ASTM	
Consortium strategy	'Supporting family agriculture in West Africa, through sustainable agricultural production, training and rural microfinance' Following on from the framework agreement, access to credit, a healthy and varied diet and organic farming, and the incomes of the beneficiaries have all substantially increased	
Coherence of the consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural development sector • West African countries (low HDI): Burkina Faso, Senegal and Togo 	
Projects	SOS Faim: Burkina Faso – Micro-finance Senegal – Micro-finance Burkina Faso – Agricultural production	ASTM: Burkina Faso – Agricultural production Togo (2) – Agricultural production Togo (2) – Agricultural training
Budget	For 2011: €785,843 (63% SOS Faim, 37% ASTM)	
Governance and supervision (consortium)	A management committee made up of members of the two NGOs coordinates the administration of the consortium. SOS Faim takes the lead. The tools relating to this management are adequate. As yet there is no joint project. The projects are managed by each of the NGOs.	
Governance and supervision (NGOs)	The governance principles of the projects are specific to the two NGOs. They have respectively put in place the appropriate tools to allow for the administrative and financial management of the projects. 'The partner is the project's principal and receives the support of the NGOs of the North which do not need to think and act in place of the players of the South'. This principle represents a weakness of the project management system, which introduces a (potentially weak) link between the NGO and the direct beneficiaries of the action.	
Contributions to results (based on the evaluation of 3 projects)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In all three assessments the partners have significant weaknesses, both at the level of financial management and administration management. The Senegal project (FONGS) is the project that presents the weakest indicators. 2. For the Burkina Faso project (UBTEC) the indicators are encouraging but legal risks present problems. For the Senegal project (FONGS), access to funding is poorly assured as the system is very weak in its design and its operation has detrimental deviations. 3. The indicators of the assessed project (ARFA – ASTM) show that satisfactory and encouraging results have been achieved. 4. The indicators of the assessed project (ARFA – ASTM) which included three training activities show that the intended objectives were almost reached 5. The two NGOs led/organised follow-up assignments 	
Recommendations	<u>Consortium</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the idea of a joint project (i.e. agriculture & microfinance) concrete • Strengthen the management committees <u>SOS Faim</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the principles on which the partnerships are established in order to strengthen these partnerships towards more substantial involvement from the NGO • Strengthen on the ground the technological support for microfinance to form a more rigorous approach and develop strategic visions that are more solid • Adapt the structure of the NGO so as to provide both operational support (i.e. regional offices/project coordinators) and technical support to projects • Improve the quality of the files through an appropriate use of the management tools (identification file, formulation file, logical framework, etc.) <u>ASTM</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financially strengthen the projects in agriculture proportionately to the objectives (geographical concentration) • Improve the proximity of the ASTM to its partners 	
Conclusions	To date, the added value of the Framework Agreement in a consortium vis-à-vis an individual framework agreement is mainly limited to exchanges between the NGOs of the North. The evaluation mission recommends that SOS Faim further develop project formulation and follow-up and also that it reviews the concept of a partnership according to Istanbul principle 6.	



2 Executive summary (English)

The programme of the current ASTM – SOS Faim consortium is entitled: 'Supporting family agriculture in West Africa, through sustainable agricultural production, training and rural microfinance'. For the two NGOs, it continues along the lines of the previous 'Programme to strengthen agricultural funding, production/marketing and training in Burkina Faso and Togo' which was initiated in 2008 and also incorporates a few evolutions with a view to strengthening the consortium and its impact so that 'at the end of the framework agreement, access to credit, a healthy and varied diet and organic agriculture, and the incomes of the recipients have all substantially increased'. It follows a geographical concentration approach, in the West African countries with a low HDI (Burkina Faso, Senegal and Togo), and also a sectoral approach and all actions follow a rural development logic. In accordance with the respective missions and visions of the two NGOs, the priority is given to:

- Basic organisations that represent the poor populations
- The microfinance institutions with strong social purpose and that work with the populations excluded from the economic system
- Service organisations that provide support to dynamics that play a part in rural development, in conjunction with farming organisations and producers.

Strengthening the players with a view to making them more autonomous and to improving services is the objective sought by training activities which are principally aimed at healthy and participatory management of agricultural land. At the level of microfinance, support is given to decentralised financial systems in a rural environment, built on a mutualist or cooperative social base, in such a way as to encourage control by members.

In concrete terms, this framework agreement is developing across 8 projects, including 3 in Burkina Faso, 4 in Togo and 1 in Senegal. In terms of theme, 2 concern microfinance (Burkina Faso and Senegal), 3 concern agricultural production (2 in Burkina Faso and 1 in Togo) and 3 concern agricultural training (in Togo). None of the projects is jointly managed by the NGOs: SOS Faim supports the 2 microfinance projects and 1 agricultural production project (in Burkina Faso) and ASTM is implementing the remainder of the projects (2 agricultural production projects, 1 in Burkina Faso, and 3 agricultural training projects). The total 2011 budget amounts to €755,843, of which 64% for SOS Faim, with an average per project of €160,000, whereas for ASTM the average is €55,000 per project. The NGOs are showing a desire to implement a joint action.

SOS Faim was created in Luxembourg in 1993 (in Belgium in 1964). The NGO employs 10 people and mainly works with rural associations (80) in 12 African countries. In terms of mission, SOS Faim acts both in the South, by supporting its partners, and in the North, by pleading for policies which respect farmers and their work. This is in particular reflected in improved access to funding in rural areas and in support to the marketing of agricultural products.

ASTM (Action Solidarité Tiers Monde) was founded in 1969 under the name 'Action Formation des Cadres (AFC)'. It was a result of the third-worldist, post-colonial movement and was in particular inspired by the thoughts of René Dumont (*L'Afrique Noire est mal partie*, 1962) and *L'Utopie ou la mort*, 1973). From 1982 onwards, the office had one member of permanent staff and would gradually come to be strengthened by the arrival of others: today its staff numbers 14. This political character is reflected in the mission that the NGO has taken on. This is formulated around five priorities:

- Supporting the movements of the South in their fight for economic, political and social emancipation
- Encouraging solidarity between the civil societies of the North and the South
- Conducting lobbying in the North to inform on the realities of the South



- Defending cultural diversity
- Giving a central role to the preoccupations of populations and their organisations.

The SOS Faim – ASTM Framework Agreement must be in accordance with the general conditions governing relations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NGOs, an agreement concluded based on a unique, clear and coherent intervention strategy. The action programme (projects) must correspond to this strategy and must integrate the concentration approaches (of type geographical, sectoral, thematic or methodological).

We confirm that the Framework Agreement does indeed integrate the dimensions of geographical and sectoral concentration. We recommend to the partners, in the context of a future Framework Agreement, to place the emphasis on a more strategic and integrated approach (i.e. in Burkina Faso we could envisage a project that would integrate the 3 sectoral dimensions: agricultural production, training and microfinance). At this stage, the Framework Agreement programme is more the reflection of a group of projects originating from various regional partners.

Although the consortium Framework Agreement presents added value for the 2 partners in the north, it is regrettable that this added value has not yet had any direct repercussions in the south.

We therefore encourage the partners to seize the opportunity that the consortium Framework Agreement presents to develop joint actions, whether this involves the joint management of a project, the implementation of additional actions or the development of methodological tools that are specific to their strategy.

In the case of this consortium, it should be stressed that the NGOs SOS Faim and ASTM state that they are carrying out 'coaching' with as their philosophy: 'The organisation of the South is the forger of its own destiny. SOS Faim and ASTM do not have to think and act in the place of the players in the South, but they have to provide them with a support mechanism with variable geometry so as to allow them to evolve and achieve their objectives'. In the same line of thinking, one of the strong values of SOS Faim is its firm desire to refuse any intervention with the NGO in the South.

Backed up by our experience and the observations made on the occasion of the 3 field evaluations, we attract the attention of the 2 NGOs to the limits of such a standpoint. Such a principle, is only valid for organisations that are structured, mature and competent.

At the end of the evaluation, we were able to observe that this principle had among others been counter-productive for certain important aspects of the 2 SOS Faim microfinance projects.

The evaluation mission on the other hand commends the development of a true partnership marked with reciprocal rights and obligations (Paris Declaration, Istanbul principle 6). This point seems essential to us due to a concern for efficiency of aid. It will be a true challenge for the NGO!

With a view to evaluating the means put in place to ensure the efficiency of development aid co-financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the evaluation mission needed to carry out the organisational audit of the consortium. However, each of the NGOs of the consortium identifies, formulates, implements, follows up and checks its own projects. As a result, the evaluation mission consequently carried out an organisational audit of each of the 2 NGOs. The findings resulting from the said organisational audits were then enriched by those of the field evaluation of three projects (2 SOS Faim microfinance projects and an ASTM agricultural production and training project).

SOS Faim organisational review

We emphasise the very positive evolution of SOS Faim and recognise the relevance of the tools at its disposal

Over 6,826,000 euros were paid to the partners by SOS Faim (Bel and Lux) in 2011. The envelope invested in Africa was > 5,000,000 for this same year, of which 71% in West Africa (Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger & Benin).



Given the sums invested in West Africa, we attract the attention of SOS Faim (Bel & Lux) to the added value (aid efficiency) that could be created by opening a regional office (or the recruitment of project coordinators/expatriates).

In addition, over these same years, SOS Faim has initiated, with a concern for efficiency, a process that is aimed at refocusing its interventions on a more limited number of countries, increasing the size of its projects and specialising in actions relating to the sectors of agriculture and microfinance.

During our field visits, the evaluation missions observed the need for greater project support. This need is certainly required by the high technicity of microfinance projects.

In this context of the specialisation of SOS Faim and the technicity of its projects (i.e. microfinance), the NGO could evolve towards a matrix structure involving the creation of a technical department (development of methodology, development of tools and quality control).

Given the technicity of the microfinance sector and the scale of the potential collateral risks for the final beneficiaries, it is essential to ensure that the projects are implemented according to a professional, technical and rigorous approach, even if this implies in-depth discussions with the local partner.

In this way, during the identification phase of projects, it would have been important that SOS Faim have the necessary information to confirm the feasibility of the strategy proposed by its partner in the South.

It is for that matter unfortunate that the documents emanating from the project formulation phase are not more developed and do not present a pluriannual strategic vision. At the end of the formulation phase, neither the local partner nor SOS Faim had estimated the budget and time necessary to achieve the set objectives. This lack of analysis is also reflected among others in the logical frameworks of the 2 projects in which no activity is mentioned. It was not, therefore, possible to establish a link between the various actions planned and the objectives to be reached.

Despite an above average number of follow-up assignments, significant delays in the implementation of projects accumulated and some issues were not dealt with or not sufficiently dealt with. These problems can be explained on the one hand by the shortcomings of the local partner and on the other hand by the low level of SOS Faim involvement at the management level itself of the project.

ASTM organisational review

Without calling into question the general good quality of the project carried out with ARFA, the latter could certainly have benefited from a closer collaboration within the ASTM team, which would have improved its efficiency and impact (exchange of experience and know-how, reflection on possible developments).

The project could also benefit from greater financial support, whether to strengthen the financial management skills of the NGO ARFA or to amplify the actions in the field.

The average budget of the ASTM projects in the framework agreement is €44,000. This is very low compared to the average for projects taken up in Framework Agreements.

With a view to ensuring efficiency of aid, we therefore encourage a sectoral refocusing and a refocusing of the countries in the NGO's portfolio.

In addition, we need to be aware that the type of follow-up carried out by ASTM (limitation of supervision) does not allow for the quick diagnosis of any possible drifts within the projects.

Consortium organisational review

With a view to improving the efficiency of their projects (quality process), we encourage the 2 NGOs, in accordance with the requirements of the framework agreement conditions, to invest in independent evaluations (mid-term and end of project/programme)

Lastly, we wish to attract the attention of the 2 NGOs to the fact that the check of the relevance of expenditure is carried out much too light-heartedly. The current practices of SOS Faim & ASTM do



not allow guarantees to be made to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the costs charged to the projects are indeed applicable to them and that there is no risk of double billing.

Microfinance project with the FONGS – Senegal

This project plans to create a network of Mutual Societies and Credit Lines emanating from the agricultural trade union FONGS (which gathers together 31 Farming Associations in the country). At first this network would gather together 9 existing mutual societies.

As detailed in the project evaluation report, the evaluation mission finds that currently neither the feasibility nor the durability of this project seems to us to be assured. The project is considered as weak overall. We therefore encourage SOS Faim to reach its own opinion on the feasibility of such a project: Go or No Go.

Moreover, we encourage the NGO to analyse the different strategic options that present themselves in order to reach the overall objective set.

In the event that the project is maintained, it will be indispensable, after the agreement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to carry out a formulation phase study prior to its implementation.

Microfinance project with the UBTECs – Burkina Faso

This project also plans to create a network (Union) of MFIs emanating from an agricultural trade union.

At this stage, the project is showing encouraging signs both from a financial and technical point of view.

Today the network is at a watershed moment (high risk) calling for technical support and more substantial follow-up in the areas of credit, risk management and financial information.

Nonetheless, we wish to point out that this network is still not recognised by Burkina Faso (approval). In the event that official approval is not quickly obtained by the management of UBTEC, we encourage the NGO SOS Faim and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take measures that are adapted to such a situation.

Agricultural production project with ARFA – Burkina Faso

This project to support organic farming is - on the whole - going well.

The partner NGO ARFA would however stand to benefit from strengthened financial support and closer follow-up by ASTM.