

Guidelines for Engagement with Developing Countries
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Iowa State University

Introduction

The mission of Iowa State University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences is to educate future leaders, conduct mission-oriented basic and applied research and share new knowledge for the betterment of Iowa and the world. We embrace our role in addressing challenges in food security, food safety, climate change, environmental stewardship, renewable energy and human health. Our students must be well-prepared to become effective global citizens as employees, employers, public leaders, stakeholders, philanthropists and other roles that benefit from a global mindset. Cross-cultural connections are critical for globally mobile faculty, staff and students — and graduates and alumni.

One way we meet our mission is through work in developing countries, where faculty, staff and students experience first-hand the profound challenges faced by many communities and offer potential solutions offered through agriculture and related fields. Much of the college's experience in developing countries, especially in Africa, is grounded in collaborative work for the benefit of small landholder farmers and with particular attention given to women farmers. We work together to help them achieve food security, improved nutrition and sustainable incomes for their families.

The following guidelines were developed in 2012-2013 as a resource to help guide the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences' engagement with developing countries.

The process of developing these guidelines includes: an extensive literature review; review of guidelines from other organizations; input received by participants at a November 2012 Feeding the World: Are We Making Progress? Seminar on Guiding Principles in International Agricultural Development: The Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Model; consultations with officials in several international organizations; and a review of a draft by faculty, staff, students and alumni.

Our goal is to ensure that the application of these principles is transparent for all partners with whom we work as well as the greater community of stakeholders of the college. These guidelines remain constant, regardless of country, partners and funding sources.

Guidelines for Engagement

1. Our work aligns with the strategic plan of the college and the university, which emphasizes our commitment to meeting global challenges and improving the lives of people worldwide.
2. We are committed to the goals of sustainable development, focusing on people-centered development through a collaborative livelihoods approach¹; improvement of the natural environment; protection of biodiversity; and working together to achieve economic sustainability.
3. We expect our faculty, staff and students to respect and value the people and communities with which we engage, conducting themselves with integrity.
4. We are committed to helping rural people in developing countries attain their goals of food security, which exists “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.” (World Food Summit, 1996). We work with them on agricultural goals that help them gain access to sufficient food and sustainable incomes, resulting in good health and well-being.
5. We value participatory decision-making, learning and collaboration among families, communities and organizations to nurture civic responsibility, effective leadership and resilient social institutions.
6. In partnership with rural people and communities, we help to address the needs of the most vulnerable through research, education and outreach. These groups may include malnourished children, women struggling as heads of their own households, displaced persons, and families living with HIV/AIDS and other devastating diseases.
7. We follow a tested, well-accepted set of extension and rural development approaches that are built on collaboration in learning, analysis and reflection:
 - **Listening.** We begin by listening to the needs and aspirations of the intended beneficiaries and stakeholders at the local community level.
 - **Analysis.** We study the resource constraints and opportunities of the specific locale to identify possible responses and to develop a baseline of information that will be used to evaluate future progress.
 - **Collaborative planning.** We use an inclusive process to develop a long-term plan with the intended beneficiaries, local leaders and other stakeholders through a transparent and public decision-making process.
 - **Blending indigenous and scientific knowledge.** We consult with the local community, researchers from ISU and experts from the region regarding

improved technologies appropriate for testing, adaptation and introduction.

- **Respect for local innovation.** We pay close attention to techniques and innovations that have been developed and adapted by local people and local farmers.
 - **Cultural sensitivity.** We implement the program in a culturally sensitive manner involving local stakeholders and leaders. Programs contain both short-term deliverables and long-term capacity development of people and institutions.
 - **Reflection.** We monitor implementation closely, reflect on lessons learned and adjust as needed in consultation with the local community and local partners.
8. We use a holistic, community needs-based, capacity development approach². This approach is applied to: reduce poverty and improve food security for families and the community; improve educational outcomes for youth and adults; and strengthen the capacity of participating nongovernmental organizations and educational institutions.
9. We respect the cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge of the communities with which we are engaged and support efforts to preserve and integrate them. We respect the legal, land and property rights of all people and communities. We are committed to managing our operations in compliance with laws and regulations of the community and the country.
10. The results of our work will be an expression of our values and principles. As a public institution of higher education, we expect our partners — individuals, groups and public and private sector entities — to strengthen our efforts to achieve results consistent with our values and principles. We expect prospective partners to openly share the values and principles that are compatible with our own. As we consider partners, we will evaluate:
- Goals and motivation for engaging with a developing country
 - Social responsibility statement
 - Past performance in similar programs
 - Commitment to sustaining and improving the natural environment
 - Commitment to philanthropy
 - Cultural sensitivity and respect for human rights, dignity and diversity
 - Commitment to sustainable development and participatory approaches in which local communities have a voice
 - Commitment to transparency and open communication, with a willingness to share their experiences with students, staff and faculty.

These touchstones will be evaluated in an ongoing basis as we begin to engage with partners and efforts move forward. We fully expect to learn from our

partners. We acknowledge the fact that strong partnerships may be based on differences that are complementary — and that the benefits may be greater as a result of joining forces with partners that have different experiences and knowledge. We expect this type of partnership, conducted with mutual openness and transparency, to generate more significant impacts and more durable outcomes than could be achieved by working separately.

¹ From the International Fund for Agricultural Development website, <http://www.ifad.org/sla/>: “The sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) is a way to improve understanding of the livelihoods of poor people. It draws on the main factors that affect poor people's livelihoods and the typical relationships between these factors. It can be used in planning new development activities and in assessing the contribution that existing activities have made to sustaining livelihoods. The two key components of the SLA are a framework that helps in understanding the complexities of poverty and a set of principles to guide action to address and overcome poverty.”

² From the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations website, <http://www.fao.org/capacitydevelopment/en/>: “Capacity is defined as ‘the ability of people, organizations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully. Capacity development is the process of unleashing, strengthening and maintaining of such capacity.’ This definition, based on the work of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC), reflects the broadest consensus possible within the international development community.”

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