

Feeding the Future

Special anniversary edition

November 2013



SAA Founders:

Mr. Ryoichi Sasakawa

Dr. Norman E. Borlaug

President Jimmy Carter



Ruth Oniang'o with Yohei Sasakawa,
Chairman of The Nippon Foundation

Hats off to the SAFE anniversary!

The 20th anniversary of the Sasakawa Africa Fund for Extension Education (SAFE) is being celebrated in Ghana in early November.

Marked by a major symposium entitled "Twenty Years of Extension Education in Africa: the SAFE way", the celebrations will start at the International Conference Centre in Accra on 6 November with the official opening involving the Ghanaian leadership, a video message from former US President Jimmy Carter and a keynote address by Nigeria's Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr Akinwumi Adesina. Speakers will include Yohei Sasakawa, Chairman of The Nippon Foundation, which has funded the SAFE programme since its inception. Ministers of Agriculture from African countries, Vice Chancellors and Deans from participating institutions, and representatives from international organisations and NGOs, will be attending.

The second part of the symposium programme will be held at the University of Cape Coast (UCC), where the SAFE programme began in 1993 under the stewardship of the former Vice Chancellor, Professor Samuel Kwasi Adjepong – who is also playing an active role in the symposium.

With the second day being launched by UCC's current Vice Chancellor, Professor Domwini

Dabire Kuupole, panelists will lead working sessions on subjects such as 'curriculum development and the value chain challenges'; 'gender – breaking down the barriers for extension'; and 'extension – the changing role of the private sector and the donor community'.

A fourth session will face up to the 'challenges of training mid-career extension staff'.

Educational opportunities

SAFE's Managing Director, Deola Naibakelao, describes his organisation's guiding philosophy as "African tertiary educational institutions offering responsive continuing educational opportunities in support of agriculture and rural development".

In this way, he says, "an increased number of mid-career staff will have opportunities to receive quality extension education locally".

The SAFE concept has spread far since those early days at UCC. Today there are 19 universities and colleges from nine African countries participating in the programme. By the end of 2013, the total enrolment, including graduates, will be 4,580.

The impact of the programme is well summed up in the history of the Sasakawa operations in Ghana, "Setting the Grassroots on Fire", edited by Joseph and Ida Kwarteng and launched in Accra on the first day of the Symposium.

Leadership roles

Professor Joe Kwarteng is a former Dean and UCC Lecturer. Writing in the book he states, "It is unquestionable that the SAFE initiative has been a good thing for Ghana. Several hundred graduates from the programme are positioned in every district in Ghana, working for the Ministry of Food and Agriculture or NGOs in various leadership roles. The programme, through the Supervised Enterprise Projects (SEPs), has also given lecturers greater exposure to the farming communities across Ghana and beyond for a better perspective of real-life agricultural and community development issues. More importantly, through the SEPs, farmers' problems are being addressed throughout the country".

Comments Deola Naibakelao: "multiply these results across our network of participating universities and it can be seen that we are making a major impact".

Message from the Chairperson of SAFE

I am delighted to be chairing this very special anniversary Symposium in Ghana. SAFE, over the years, has tackled the problem of extension education with determination and courage, under the leadership of Dr Deola Naibakelao. It is a remarkable story, only made possible by the support of The Nippon Foundation and by the participating institutions, which have kept their faith and belief in our project.

We know that the next few years will present many challenges. These are sure to be discussed at this Symposium. But I have no doubt, on the basis of the progress already made, that we will succeed and, through the programme, make a substantial and sustainable contribution to food security in Africa.

It is good that we are convening in Ghana – and particularly at UCC on the second day, where SAFE was conceived and born.

Hon Professor Ruth K Oniang'o
Chairperson,
Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA)
Chairperson, Sasakawa Africa Fund
for Extension Education (SAFE)

COMMENT

One of the most invigorating and rewarding results of SAFE has been the interaction between institutions of higher learning across our African continent.

Within the SAFE network, our partner institutions do not exist in ivory towers. They learn from each others' experiences and examples.

For instance, a consultative workshop on the development of training modules and the semi-distance learning mode, was conducted for Francophone countries in Burkina Faso earlier this year.

Regional and national workshops are held on a regular basis – and the SAFE network system ensures that even countries which are not Sasakawa/SG2000 focus countries (Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda) are actively involved in all regional activities and professional exchanges.

Another example of this interaction was the recent visit of Vice Chancellors, Deans and Heads of Department from Ethiopia and Nigeria to the University of Cape Coast, Ghana.

We are thus able to confront our major challenges together – such as issues of gender, mainstreaming the value chain in the curriculum, inadequate financing from employers in support of the Supervised Enterprise Projects (SEPs), trying to develop a clear pathway from diplomas to degrees – and, crucially, the shortage of resources compared with the huge demand for SAFE programmes from many universities and colleges.

It never fails to amaze me how SAFE has grown. For example, there are no less than seven universities in the SAFE network in Ethiopia alone.

As Yohei Sasakawa said, SAFE has lit a torch for the rest of Africa. We look forward to the next twenty years with confidence.

Dr Deola Naibakelao

*Managing
Director
SAFE*



Changing world of extension

Extension is back on the development agenda, but not as we knew it in the 1980s. National and international efforts to revitalise extension services – also referred to as 'advisory services' – have resulted in a variety of institutional reforms. Decentralisation, contracting/outsourcing, public-private partnerships, and privatisation have started to transform conventional models of public-sector agricultural advisory services. Revitalisation of the public-sector has also been an important strategy.

In addition, new actors have entered the scene to provide and finance advisory services, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), farmer groups and community-based organisations. Private-sector companies provide embedded advisory services, which are integrated in commercial transactions such as the sale of inputs or contract farming. The term 'pluralistic' has been coined to capture the emerging diversity of institutional options in providing and financing agricultural advisory services (Birner et al. 2009 in Wongtschowski et al. 2013).

Extension today is viewed from a broader systems perspective, with new roles and capacities required, and new tools available. Sulaiman and Davis (2012) define extension services as "all the different activities that provide information and services required by farmers and other actors in rural settings to assist them in developing their own technical, organisational, and management skills and practices so as to improve their livelihoods and well-being". The services include

the private, public, and civil society sectors working within the broader agricultural system.

The above definition implies new roles which stem from the challenges we face today. In addition to traditional roles in promoting agricultural innovations, extension is being asked to deal with a myriad of different issues, including human nutrition, risk and resilience, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Those involved in extension are looking to new tools such as information and communication

technologies to enhance and scale up their work. Issues such as capacity, gender, policy, and multifunctional agriculture are part of the discussion.

Extension's role at the interface of information/technology generation and its use still remains valid. Extension systems provide a platform for translating agricultural knowledge and innovation into increased and sustainable productivity of smallholder agriculture.

Dr Jeff Mutimba
SAFE, Ethiopia



Mid-career student of UCC (Ghana) promoting budded seedlings at nursery site.

Statistics of SAFE students from 1993 to 2013 (as of October 2013)

SAFE Program universities/ colleges and countries	Graduated			Current			Total
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
University of Cape Coast, Ghana (B.Sc.)	350	98	448	48	5	53	501
Kwadaso Agric. College, Ghana (Dip)	427	83	510	43	4	47	557
Haramaya, Ethiopia (B.Sc.)	365	62	427	65	15	80	507
Hawasa, Ethiopia (B.Sc.)	137	17	154	24	27	51	205
Makerere, Uganda (B.Sc.)	115	73	188	128	77	205	393
Sokoine, Tanzania (B.Sc.)	559	158	717	220	89	309	1026
IPR/IFRA, Mali (Maitrise)	135	20	155	42	7	49	204
Samanko Centre, Mali (Dip)	58	19	77	39	11	50	127
Ahmadu Bello, Nigeria (B.Sc.)	99	11	110	32	8	40	150
Bayero University, Nigeria (B.Sc.)	97	6	103	50	2	52	155
Abomey-Calavi, Benin (B.Sc.)	73	8	81	60	16	76	157
Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso (B.Sc.)	55	14	69	44	7	51	120
Lilongwe University, Malawi (Dip.)	32	10	42	15	5	20	62
Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia (B.Sc.)	-	-	-	18	14	32	32
Adamawa State University, Nigeria (BSc)	-	-	-	19	5	24	24
Illorin University, Nigeria (B.Sc.)	-	-	-	10	5	15	15
Mekele, Ethiopia (B.Sc.)	-	-	-	63	16	79	79
Wollo, Ethiopia (B.Sc.)	-	-	-	19	10	29	29
Jimma, Ethiopia (B.Sc.)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SUB-TOTAL	2,502	579	3,081	920	313	1,233	4,318
Scholarships	Graduated			Current			Total
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Diploma	6	-	6	-	-	-	6
B.Sc.	29	3	32	-	-	-	32
M.Sc.	51	8	59	2	-	2	61
PhD	4	1	5	2	4	6	11
SUB-TOTAL	90	12	102	4	4	8	110
GRAND TOTAL	2,592	591	3,183	924	317	1,241	4,428

The problem of gender

SAFE recognises that the low number of women candidates for its programme is a serious challenge. Despite the importance of their role in African agriculture, women farmers have been marginalised by extension. Rural communities often seem to have a low opinion of the potential and talent of women – and, in return, many women seem to lack the confidence to push for opportunities that will benefit them. Family responsibilities also make it difficult for women to take up such opportunities.

These traditional attitudes impact on the SAFE programme. SAFE, in turn, has taken various measures to redress this imbalance – for example, the Ford Foundation scholarships through Winrock International in Ethiopia and, recently, the Chris Dowsell scholarship. Sandwich programmes – distance learning, continuing education and outreach programmes – have all been introduced. Notably these programmes have included SAFE Kwadaso in Ghana, and Abomey Calavi in Benin. UCC has organised tutorial classes to assist women mid-career professionals to improve their maths and English in preparation for admission into the programme. This has been effective.

The number of institutions offering the diploma course is also helpful in training women to pursue the degree programme. Kwadaso has been prominent in this – as has Samanko Agricultural College in Mali. The diploma level programmes, which are shorter in duration, are beneficial to women.

All institutions in the SAFE network are aware of the need to devote at

least 30 percent of their admission quota to women.

Says Mercy Akeredolu of SAFE Nigeria, "Reinforcement of human resource capacity, particularly women, within SAFE partner institutions is necessary, with much emphasis on graduate programme training. The current statistics of female lecturers in departments of agricultural extension is low compared with men. Female faculty members in all our participating institutions occupy lower positions due to their level of qualifications – mostly BSc or MSc holders. We are working to redress this".



New taro variety introduced by Dadiso Finta (left) and a mid-career student at Haramaya University in Ethiopia

Supervised Enterprise Projects

Supervised Enterprise Projects (SEPs) are the backbone of the SAFE programme. They provide an opportunity for students to develop their expertise in specific aspects of their work. Essentially they narrow the gap between theory and practice – immersing students in valuable farmer-focused learning activities.

SEPs are organised into two phases. The first phase takes place at the end of the first year of study. Students then conduct an assessment of farmers' extension needs, while developing an extension project to address those needs. Farmers, employers and lecturers (supervisors) are involved. During the second phase – after the completion of three semesters of study on campus – students return to the farming areas concerned to implement their projects independently over six to nine months.



Abdi Azaz (far right) a mid-career student at Hawassa University (Ethiopia) discussing his carrot SEP with farmers and his supervisors.

Revitalising extension – the challenge for SAFE

SAFE has been described as Sasakawa's most significant contribution to institutional capacity building – with over 4,500 extension agents benefitting from the programme, by the end of 2013, since it was founded at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) in 1993.

Extension education in Africa is a highly neglected area. Handicapped by inadequate funding and outdated curricula, no more than 10 percent of Africa's extensionists hold a BSc university degree – while a further 15 to 20 percent have a higher diploma. The rest hold a certificate or lower. The average age is over 40 (with the exception of Ethiopia) and most extensionists in African countries are men. Due to social and cultural barriers, this limits their effectiveness in working with women farmers.

It was the legendary Dr Norman E Borlaug, President of the Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA), who first suggested that a scholarship fund be established for outstanding young extension agents, working in Sasakawa-Global 2000 project countries. SAA had started operations in Ghana in 1986.

In 1992, the SAA Board approved a scholarship programme, to

be administered by Winrock International. The plan called for 32 scholarships at BSc level at local universities and 16 MSc and four PhD scholarships at foreign universities. These PhD candidates were identified and sent to the USA and Europe.

Change of direction

But in 1993, the SAFE Coordinator, Dr. Deola Naibakelao, and his counterparts at Winrock International, Dr. Roger Steele and Dr. David Mattocks, came up with a proposal to reorient the programme. The foreign study was expensive and there was a growing conviction that the focus should be on BSc and diploma studies which would fit far better with the academic credentials of the majority of extension agents. Even more importantly, they recommended that the SAFE programme should concentrate on capacity building in African countries and universities.

It was UCC which first established a BSc course in agricultural extension to open doors for mid-career professionals through advanced training. The course featured new curricula more clearly linked to the real world of African farming.

As stated in the history of Sasakawa in Ghana, Setting the Grassroots on Fire, "the early days of the SAFE initiative were a true struggle. One of the major difficulties encountered in the process of establishing SAFE was the inflexibility of Ghanaian universities. These institutions had



Mid-career students working on class assignments in the computer laboratory at Samanko College, Mali

been preoccupied with upholding 'academic rigour' rather than responding to the real needs of the society in which they were based. There were doubts about the ability of mid-career staff to excel in the formal university training system because they were thought to have 'lost track' due to their many years away from school. It was indeed a frustrating process to get the programme recognised and accepted. Everything that was done had to be piloted and proven. Almost everything, including the training approach and the entire curriculum, was new. SAFE was reinvented as it was implemented and it was a continuous learning journey".

Strong UCC leadership

But with strong leadership at UCC, through the Vice Chancellor, Professor Adjepong, SAFE strengthened its roots in the university system. Winrock International secured an expert in agricultural extension and adult education, Dr. Moses Zinnah, to the SAFE programme at UCC. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture

agreed to release its staff (the extensionists) on full salary and reabsorb them on completion of their studies. Initial resources were provided by the Sasakawa Africa Association.

Moses Zinnah of Winrock was able to report later that "a major achievement of the SAFE programme is that all 24 students (21 percent females) in the first batch successfully completed their studies in 1996. Twenty-five percent graduated with first class honours".

From this firm foundation, SAFE branched out to other institutions across Africa. It could truly be said that Ghana, again, had shown the way.



Sasakawa Centre

Opening the Sasakawa Centre in March 1995, Yohei Sasakawa spoke of UCC's SAFE programme as "lighting a torch for the rest of Africa. We believe, too, that the students have a vast amount of experience to bring to the University." The new centre provided 25 beds for accommodation as well as a conference centre, lecture rooms and offices. Apart from the Sasakawa Africa Association, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, USAID, and UCC participated in the project.

Ghana's then Minister of Finance, Dr Kwesi Botchwey, also attended the inauguration ceremony while Vice Chancellor Professor Adjepong noted that "a major obstacle to food production is now being tackled by incentivising extension workers who are in direct contact with the farming community."

SAFE Alumni Associations

SAFE Alumni Associations are established with the objective of putting mid-career graduates under one umbrella for experience sharing, contributing to the improvement of agricultural extension service delivery in their countries and, consequently, the development of agriculture at national level.

Alumni Associations have helped to strengthen and facilitate networks among SAFE graduates while linking up with other sister institutions in agricultural education. They have promoted the welfare of farmers in their respective countries by establishing communications among participating universities, agricultural extension professionals, researchers, academic staff, and policy-makers. SAFE has also provided funds for alumni members to participate in international professional and networking workshops.

Alumni associations helped to supervise students' SEPs, making the supervision much easier for lecturers and students. In addition, the associations are helping in the collection of graduates' tracer information in their respective countries. All alumni associations hold an annual alumni congress to debate on topical agricultural issues and produce an annual newsletter.

The SAFE Alumni Association in Ghana was established in 2002, holding its first alumni association congress in April that year. Kwadaso Agricultural College has provided office space for the association's secretariat.

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