



FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

Policy LINK Semi-Annual Report

October 1, 2021–March 31, 2022

In partnership with:

USAID Bureau for Resilience and Food Security | USAID/Bangladesh | USAID/Ethiopia
USAID/Ghana | USAID/Kenya and East Africa | USAID/South Sudan



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Policy LINK
LEADERSHIP & COLLABORATION
FOR BETTER POLICY SYSTEMS

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HOW WE WORK



As a global program, Policy LINK offers thought leadership, facilitation, and other resources to USAID Missions implementing Feed the Future policy programming. In addition to these geographic buy-ins, Policy LINK works with the USAID Bureau for Resilience and Food Security (RFS), which oversees the global program, to generate and share learning from its global activities as well as offer “backbone” support to the African Union’s Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Policy LINK has continued to extend USAID’s impact globally through a new buy-in from USAID/Ghana as well as deeper engagement with its USAID/Ethiopia and USAID/Bangladesh buy-ins. At the same time, Policy LINK is preparing to wrap up its partnerships with USAID/South Sudan and USAID/Kenya and East Africa, an effort that has included documenting activities, best practices, and learning through a dedicated [resource portal](#)—in the case of South Sudan—and a series of white papers based on [country dialogues](#) in East Africa.

Throughout, these efforts at the country and regional levels have been strengthened by the Policy LINK global team, which offers core support through its operations, communications, and monitoring, evaluation, and learning teams. These teams are part of a buy-in from the USAID Bureau for Resilience and Food Security, whose investment in these core functions is adding value to Missions’ work in-country while offering an efficient mechanism for standing up responsive policy activities—an imperative made even more important in the wake of Russia’s war on Ukraine and its impact on food systems worldwide.

Thanks to the cross-cutting global team, Mission buy-in programs are able to leverage learning and the experience from different contexts as we refine and adapt our approach to country-led policy systems strengthening in each of these countries. For example, Policy LINK is currently scoping a policy issue and actor landscaping exercise in Ghana that builds on lessons learned from implementing similar mapping efforts in both Bangladesh and Ethiopia.

FY 2021



Number of individuals participating in USG food security programs: **3092**

889

Female

2028

Male

175

Gender disaggregate not available

FY 2022



Number of individuals participating in USG food security programs: **2416**

Target FY 2022: **2402**

789

Female

1620

Male

7

Gender disaggregate not available

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

During this period, Policy LINK’s core global team support marked a key milestone in the launch of the third Biennial Review report, the signature publication of the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) and a critical measure of African Union Member States’ progress toward the 2014 Malabo Commitments. Grounded in goals—like halving poverty and eliminating hunger on the continent—that are to be met by 2025, the report offers a data-informed snapshot of what remains to be done, while establishing common ground for productive dialogue among key stakeholders at the local, national, and regional levels. From convening these stakeholders at the report’s launch to supporting their engagement through national dialogues leading up to the event, Policy LINK, through its core support, has been instrumental in sustaining momentum around CAADP. More on Policy LINK’s support can be found in the USAID/Bureau for Resilience and Food Security section on [page 6](#).

Across Policy LINK’s geographic buy-ins, activities fell into two broad categories. First, Policy LINK teams supporting USAID/South Sudan and USAID/Kenya and East Africa focused on capturing knowledge generated through their buy-ins and sharing it with USAID Missions and implementing partners in-country and beyond. More on these efforts is included in each buy-in’s respective section, on pages [30](#) and [25](#). Second, Policy LINK’s teams in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Ghana are ramping up implementation of a common approach to improving policy systems at the country level. The Bangladesh activity is a bit farther along in implementation given its early start date—providing valuable learning to Ethiopia and Ghana. As shown in the graphic on the preceding slide and detailed in the sections on each of these buy-ins, Policy LINK engaged more than 2,400 individuals across its buy-ins, where a broad cross-section of stakeholders is ensuring greater inclusivity in policy processes.



USAID BUREAU FOR RESILIENCE AND FOOD SECURITY



Policy LINK

As a global program, Policy LINK offers thought leadership, facilitation, and other resources to support people, platforms, and participatory learning. Through the USAID Bureau for Resilience and Food Security, Policy LINK offers “backbone” support to the African Union’s Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme as well as incubates development solutions that can be scaled through USAID Missions in other countries.

HIGHLIGHTS THIS PERIOD

On behalf of the USAID Bureau for Resilience and Food Security, Policy LINK works with partners and stakeholders on a global level to:

- Facilitate learning, collaboration, and thought leadership for policy systems strengthening
- Strengthen CAADP learning and accountability platforms at country levels
- Strengthen systems and local capacities for inclusive policy processes

The following slides summarize activities under each of the above categories during this period.



Number of individuals participating in
USG food security programs in FY 2022: **391**



163
People in
Government



169
People in
Civil Society



27
People in
Private Sector
Firms



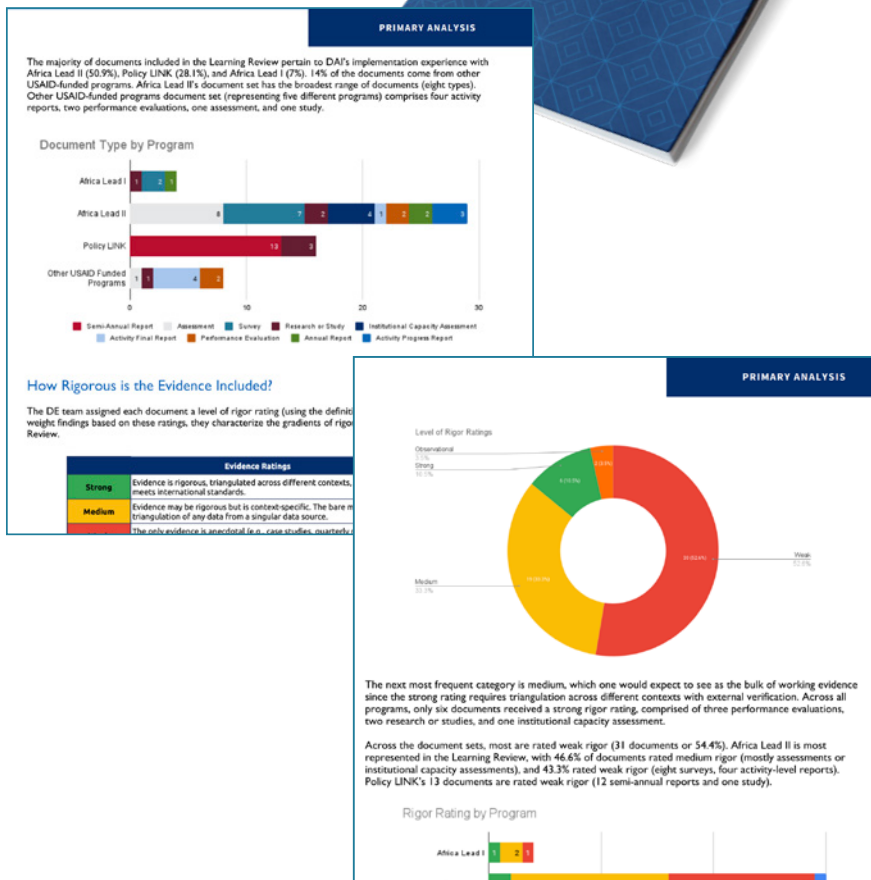
32
Producers

LEARNING, COLLABORATION, AND THOUGHT LEADERSHIP FOR POLICY SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING



Developmental Evaluation Learning Review

During the period, Policy LINK completed a foundational milestone in the project’s Developmental Evaluation (DE), called the Learning Review, which is a rigorous coding and analysis of qualitative documents and data to gather learning to inform future strategy design, strategic planning, and decision-making. The Learning Review provides evidence-based findings, conclusions, and recommendations (FCRs) grounded in Policy LINK’s programming principles and intervention areas. The FCRs will help Policy LINK prioritize evaluation questions for the first cycle of the DE. Some of the key findings from the Learning Review include:



- Evidence Gaps in CAADP Support Activities:** Evidence about development partners’ efforts in CAADP coordination processes and activities are largely in descriptive terms, focused on what support was provided, to whom, and additional support needed. There is insufficient evidence about which interventions work and why. This evidence is needed to improve planning, data collection, reporting, and evaluation of progress toward CAADP commitments. To address this, Policy LINK is exploring resources and scoping for a Developmental Evaluation—or other evaluative activity—specific to the CAADP work.
- Limited Evidence on Outcomes of Participatory Approaches:** There is limited evidence on the outcomes of participatory approaches used to engage or gather data and feedback from local stakeholders. Participatory approaches are neither clearly defined nor differentiated from each other. LINK will be addressing these gaps through continued investment in our monitoring, evaluation, and learning system and global resources for learning and evaluation activities, including the project-wide developmental evaluation.

LEARNING, COLLABORATION, AND THOUGHT LEADERSHIP FOR POLICY SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING (CONTINUED)

Resource Coordination and Adaptive Management for IA Assessments

The global Policy LINK team has established and is facilitating a group of Institutional Architecture Assessment (IAA) practitioners that is supporting three concurrent IAAs with bilateral Missions, coordinating support, sharing learning, and identifying additional resource needs. The Missions benefit from this collaboration and real-time knowledge sharing in terms of timely adaptations and resource sharing. During the period, some examples of this cross-project support included sharing lessons and tools for engaging host-country stakeholders in data collection exercises as well as advising on how best to procure data collection services and navigating country-level permissions around data collection.



STRENGTHEN CAADP LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY PLATFORMS AT COUNTRY LEVELS

During this period, Policy LINK supported the African Union Commission with a series of consultations and events that culminated in the launch of the 3rd CAADP Biennial Review Report. The report and the preceding events are linked to the 2014 Malabo Declaration, which signaled a re-commitment to the CAADP principles and goals adopted earlier in 2003 with the Maputo Declaration. Malabo went further by identifying specific goals and targets to be achieved within a period of ten years. The targets include ending hunger, tripling intra-African trade in agricultural goods and services, enhancing resilience of livelihoods and production systems, and ensuring that agriculture contributes significantly to poverty reduction.



Malabo Policy Learning Event (MAPLE): From November 22-23, 2021, Policy LINK supported the African Union Commission and its partners to convene the MAPLE, an annual policy dialogue that brings together technical networks, country-level policy practitioners, and leaders to discuss critical agricultural policy topics, share learning, and generate actions that can drive progress toward the Malabo Declaration's commitments. In addition to supporting event production at the MAPLE, Policy LINK advised on the design of the agenda, selection of the speakers, and talking points.

[Read more >>](#)

[MAPLE Event Page](#)

CAADP Partnership Platform: From November 24-26, 2021, Policy LINK supported the CAADP Partnership Platform, an annual event for national stakeholders and donors supporting the CAADP process. The theme, "Ending Hunger in Africa by 2025 through Resilient Food Systems," built on the momentum generated by the UN Food System Summit. The event also marked the midway point in African Union Member States' drive to meet the Malabo Declaration's seven commitments. In addition to its event production support, Policy LINK also assisted with talking points for USAID Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator Alexious Butler, who spoke at the event.

[Read more >>](#)

[CAADP Partnership Platform Event Page](#)

STRENGTHEN CAADP LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY PLATFORMS AT COUNTRY LEVELS (CONTINUED)

Biennial Review Report Launch: On March 10, 2022, with support from Policy LINK, the African Union Commission launched the CAADP 3rd Biennial Review Report. The virtual event, which was attended by 400 people, featured officials from the African Union Commission and African Union Member states, as well as representatives of regional economic communities, civil society, and donors. In addition to assisting with the design of the event and updating a [toolkit](#) sharing BR data, Policy LINK developed a [dashboard](#) detailing attendance—by country, gender, age, and organization type—at the Biennial Review launch. Interest in the event spiked this year, with attendees hailing from 61 countries worldwide. Just over 23 percent of registrants identified as representatives of civil society organizations, farmers' associations, or independent farms.

[Read more >>](#)

[With USAID Policy LINK Support, AUC Launches 3rd Biennial Review Report](#)

CAADP Business Plan Launch: In tandem with the above launch, the AUC also announced a CAADP business plan which was developed with Policy LINK support. To arrive at the plan, which will guide CAADP efforts over the next two years, Policy LINK organized nine workshops over six months with representatives of key AUC agencies, AU Member States, civil society, the private sector, academia, and think tanks. The process, which included “writeshops” aimed at forging consensus among the diverse group, eventually culminated in a 19-page plan that details practical actions—like focusing on seven program areas and establishing a new CAADP Advisory and Coordinating Committees—to enhance collaboration and propel AU Member States' last-mile push toward the Malabo targets.

[Read more >>](#)

[When It Comes to Agricultural Development, the AU Means Business](#)



STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS AND LOCAL CAPACITIES FOR INCLUSIVE POLICY PROCESSES

Building on the legacy of its predecessor project, USAID Africa Lead, Policy LINK supports leaders and networks championing food systems policy development in their respective countries as well as regionally. To this end, Policy LINK’s global team supports the coaching component of the Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA), advises a regional facilitator network as it seeks to further institutionalize its work, and designs and delivers leadership training for our buy-in teams in coordination with partner USAID Missions.



Facilitator Network

The impact of this Africa-based facilitator network, which emerged from years of USAID’s sustained engagement in the region, is being extended with the assistance of Policy LINK, which is ensuring that the services of professional facilitators are available as a “global good” to other Policy LINK buy-ins and to USAID Missions and their partners worldwide. During this reporting period, Policy LINK assisted the regional network of facilitators with registering themselves as an independent organization. More on this activity will be included in Policy LINK’s annual report.

Leadership Training for Buy-In Teams

Policy LINK’s four-day Leading for Results webinar series, piloted in Bangladesh during the last reporting period, was delivered in Ethiopia during the period. Scaling these leadership offerings, while adapting them to local contexts, is part of the Policy LINK core team’s added value to the global program and contributes to the RFS knowledge base. Participants in the Ethiopia Leading for Results series, the activity’s inaugural public engagement since it was launched late last year, included representatives of other USAID implementing partners in the country as well as non-state actors, or NSAs, such as academic and research institutions, civil society organizations, and private-sector entities. For an overview of the Leading for Results training Policy LINK conducted in Ethiopia during this period, please click [here](#).

STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS AND LOCAL CAPACITIES FOR INCLUSIVE POLICY PROCESSES (CONTINUED)

Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture:

The Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) Leadership Training is a joint initiative of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), the African Management Institute, and Policy LINK. The program features practical “action learning projects” as well as a coaching component. Coaching sessions have been focused on facilitating identification and agreement of coaching goals and methods for holding oneself and team members accountable. Since the CALA program began in August, the coaches have held 16 executive coaching sessions in addition to 16 team coaching sessions per month.

In November 2021, after about three months of implementation of the 16-month CALA Leadership Training program, Policy LINK held its first coaching conclave, bringing together coaches to share challenges, coaching methodologies and recommendations for continued support of the coaching component. In addition, representatives of the partner institutions organized in-person meetings with cohort participants in all eight CALA countries. The purpose of these meetings was to solicit feedback on the program and listen to suggestions for modifications.

During the period, AGRA launched a study to look at baseline participant competencies and perceptions of progress thus far and gather feedback on program design. Policy LINK and the African Management Institute have provided feedback and input to the study design and tools—and are in ongoing collaborations with AGRA and the evaluator as they implement the study. Findings from the study have provided important input to an adaptive design of the second cohort.

[Read more >>](#)

[Connecting Coaches to Improve Leadership Training Outcomes](#)



SUPPORT TO AKADEMIYA2063

In July 2020, with funding from a standard grant issued through USAID/ Policy LINK, AKADEMIYA2063 (A2063) took over leadership of three International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) programs supporting CAADP: the Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS), the African Growth and Development Policy (AGRODEP) Modeling Consortium, and the Malabo Montpellier Panel (MaMo Panel).

The overall purposes of Policy LINK’s grant to AKADEMIYA2063 are 1) support for A2063 to establish itself as an NGO based in Rwanda as it transitions its people, functions, and processes from IFPRI to A2063; 2) continuity of ongoing programs and activities to strengthen policy design and implementation of CAADP by the African Union and its Member States; 3) institutional capacity-building support to the African Union Commission’s Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (AUC-DREA); and 4) trade, nutrition, and resilience: assessing and responding to the impact of COVID-19 among vulnerable communities in the Sahel and Horn of Africa.

During the reporting period, key achievements included:

- Supported the 2021 Biennial Review process, the launch of the 3rd Biennial Review Report and the “Training of CAADP and BR Regional Experts” held in Côte d’Ivoire in March 2022.
- Published 2019 CAADP Biennial Review briefs for Madagascar, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Angola.
- Supported the planning of—and presented at the Malabo Policy Learning Event (MAPLE) November 22—23 and the 17th CAADP Partnership Platform November 24—26.
- In October 2021, finalized the 2021 ReSAKSS Annual Trends and Outlook Report. Launched production of the 2022 report in January.
- Finalized the Malabo Montpellier Panel Report, “Recipes for Success:



Policy Innovations for Food Systems Transformation, Building Resilience and Adapting to Climate Change” and supported its launch at the ninth meeting of the Malabo Montpellier Forum on November 23.

- Launched the production of the 2022 Africa Agriculture Trade Monitor that will focus on examining trends in global and intra-African trade and competitiveness, and an ex ante analysis of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement.
- Published six COVID-19 briefs focusing on global commodity prices and trade performance, growth, and poverty, in Cameroon, Guinea, and Uganda, and one on the “Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Staples Food Prices in Local Markets: The Case of Maize in Rwanda.”
- Launched work on the Comprehensive African Climate Change Initiative project through a workshop on November 24, focusing on evidence to support the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change at country and continental levels.

USAID/BANGLADESH

The Feed the Future Bangladesh Policy LINK Agricultural Policy Activity aims to strengthen the capacities of Bangladesh's key agricultural actors and institutions, improve the policy environment, and cultivate policymaking processes that enable inclusive, sustainable agriculture-led economic growth, strengthen the resilience of people and systems, and support a well-nourished population, especially women, youth, and other vulnerable groups. The Activity encourages stakeholders to take the lead in identifying policy challenges and developing practical solutions for the seed sector, nutrition, food safety, and the social safety net. The following summary of activities reflects progress against the above goals during this reporting period, which saw Policy LINK engage a broad range of stakeholders in reviewing policies corresponding to each of its four focus areas.

As part of the Feed the Future Bangladesh Policy LINK Agricultural Policy Activity, Policy LINK's team in Bangladesh submits quarterly reports to the USAID Mission in Dhaka. These reports are available upon request.

HIGHLIGHTS THIS PERIOD

Bangladesh

During this reporting period, the Policy Activity undertook participatory policy reviews to identify priorities for the seed sector, nutrition, social safety net, and food safety. In addition to reviewing relevant policies and regulations, the Activity convened stakeholders throughout USAID's Zone of Resilience and Zone of Influence to discuss policy issues. In the Zone of Resilience, these consultations took place in Bandarban and Cox's Bazar. In the Zone of Influence, these consultations took place in Barisal, Jashore, and Khulna.

Extensive stakeholder consultations helped Policy LINK build relationships with policy actors in government, the private sector, and civil society, among other stakeholder groups. These engagements produced rich insights into common policy priorities that lay a foundation for co-creating practical solutions and transitioning to a more evidence-informed policymaking process. Examples of these consultations in the seed sector are summarized on the following slides.

DATA POINT

How Climate Change Is Impacting Agricultural Production in Bangladesh



Many of the regions where Policy LINK works face severe threats from climate change. Experts estimate that, in just the last 35 years, climate change-induced salinization of soil and water increased by an estimated 26 percent across Bangladesh, adversely affecting production of various crops—both around coastal areas and deeper inland.



Number of individuals participating in
USG food security programs in FY 2022: **578**

251

People in
Government

148

People in
Civil Society

59

People in
Private Sector
Firms

120

Producers

JASHORE



In October, Policy Activity brought together government and private-sector stakeholders in Jashore, a western border district of about 2.8 million people, for a discussion about national seed policy and how it intersects with the growing impact of climate change. The Policy Activity-facilitated workshop welcomed more than 40 representatives from various public, private, nonprofit, and media organizations. Government representation was the highest of any Policy Activity event to date. The workshop concluded with a commitment from participants to collaborate on future policy dialogues, working together to formulate and reform efforts linked to the seed sector.

[Read more>>](#)

[Climate Change Takes Front Seat at Seed Policy Workshop](#)

COX'S BAZAR



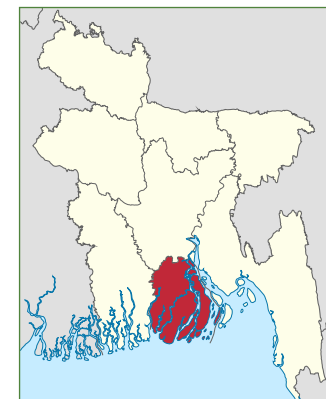
In November, Policy Activity convened consecutive workshops with a total of 67 public- and private-sector representatives on national seed policy in Cox's Bazar, the southeastern coastal district hosting a displaced Rohingya population, and Bandarban, the hilly southeastern district that makes up one-third of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Throughout both sessions, participants discussed training on seed collection and preservation technologies for farmers and seed producers, a specialized germplasm center and seed banks for conserving seed varieties indigenous to the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and registration of seed varieties developed by innovative local farmers.

[Read more>>](#)

[Seeding Sustainable Agricultural Solutions in Bangladesh](#)



BARISAL



In February, Policy Activity shared the story of Dr. Shamim Mia and a team of agronomists at the Patuakhali Science and Technology University, named after the southern coastal district where it is located. These experts are working with farmers to explore how homegrown rice germplasms are more resilient to climate change than their hybrid and high-yielding cousins. The indigenous varieties' more nutrient-rich profile is also informing the team's work through a collaboration with Texas Tech University, which is helping research the tolerance of coastal rice varieties to submerged conditions. Their research could prompt policy changes that would renew interest in indigenous germplasms—among both farmers and consumers.

[Read more >>](#)

[Climate Change Renews Interest in Homegrown Rice Varieties](#)



USAID/ETHIOPIA



Through its Champions for Food Security (C4FS) Activity, Policy LINK provides technical assistance and institutional capacity strengthening support to the Government of Ethiopia and other policy system actors as they transition to a more inclusive and transparent policy development process. The C4FS will assist the government to create space for inclusive, participatory policy dialogue with the private sector and civil society, introduce evidence and analysis into the dialogue, and expand economic opportunities.

Civil conflict—and the associated bilateral relationship between Ethiopia and the US—have contributed to slower progress in Ethiopia than planned. Where relevant, the descriptions of progress below include additional explanation around delays in implementation.

HIGHLIGHTS THIS PERIOD

The Ethiopia team completed its Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan during this period. The document reflects the U.S. government’s re-engagement strategy in the country while continuing to prioritize collaboration with non-state actors as well as the private and public sectors in an effort to boost locally driven agricultural policy systems change. As with other activity-level MEL plans, the C4FS MEL Plan aligns with the global Policy LINK MEL Plan.

A copy of the MEL Plan can be accessed [here](#).

The C4FS activity also trained two cohorts of Ethiopian and international professionals as part of a four-day Leading for Results webinar series. Participants in the series, the Activity’s inaugural public engagement since it was launched late last year, included representatives of other USAID implementing partners in the country as well as non-state actors such as academic and research institutions, civil society organizations, and private-sector entities.

Please see the next slide for more about the training.



FOOD SECURITY TRAINING



Over four days, each cohort of the Leading for Results series—which included 34 representatives of non-state actors and 26 representatives of USAID implementing partners—engaged in facilitated discussions anchored in four themes: growth mindset, leadership styles, collaboration, and leading rather than managing. A full description of the content as well as links to slides and participant resources can be found on the Policy LINK website [here](#).

Their engagement will be a linchpin of the C4FS strategy, which aims, as its name conveys, to develop the capacity of policy system “champions.” The five-year C4FS activity is part of USAID/Ethiopia’s broader push to facilitate the transition from a government-led and -implemented policy development paradigm to one driven by multiple stakeholders. Bringing these leaders together, where they could forge common cause and explore topics of leadership, was a key objective of the Leading for Results series.

Policy LINK adapts its Leading for Results series, which has also been delivered in Bangladesh, to local contexts, where empowering local leaders to engage effectively in policy systems—especially around agriculture—is a key aim of the USAID program.

Read more >>

- [Policy LINK Brings Together Food Security ‘Champions’ in Ethiopia](#)
- [Leading for Results training materials](#)

POLICY MAPPING


C4FS is conducting a study to map Ethiopia's current agriculture and food security policy systems. This "policy mapping" is informed by a literature review and stakeholder input obtained through interviews and focus group discussions with representatives from the public sector and civil society—including the private sector and academia. As of the end of the period, C4FS had developed a first draft of the study that includes an inventory and visual mapping of key policy actors, processes, and relationships that influence the agriculture and food security policy systems in Ethiopia. The team had planned to finalize and validate the report by the end of the period but has shifted the timeline to May due to some unforeseen circumstances preventing the research team from completing the report during the month of March.

Earlier challenges in recruiting for three key long term positions (the Capacity Strengthening Lead/Deputy Country Lead, Collaborative Governance Lead, and MEL Systems Lead) also contributed to a slower start and pace on this activity. However, the activity is fully resourced at this time – with the Capacity Strengthening Lead/Deputy Country Lead and Collaborative Governance Lead now on board, and the research team on a strong footing to deliver against the revised timeline.

During the period, C4FS continued planning for an institutional architecture assessment (IAA) which will build on the policy mapping exercise. While the policy mapping provides the "who" and "what," the IAA looks at the "how" (how the policy system is performing). The delays in the policy mapping activity have affected the pace of the institutional architecture assessment. However, with additional support from Policy LINK's Global Team, with the Capacity Strengthening Lead/Deputy Country Lead and Collaborative Governance Lead now on board, and with the MEL Systems Lead joining in May, C4FS is actively accelerating implementation on this important activity.



USAID/GHANA



The five-year FtF Ghana Policy LINK Activity supports the Government of Ghana, especially the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, to strengthen the capacity of agricultural actors and institutions to participate in the agricultural transformation process and contribute to improved food and nutrition outcomes and inclusive economic growth. Policy LINK's experience shows that investments in deepening and broadening stakeholder engagement in policy processes have a significant impact on policy outcomes and can help leverage other investments in the policy system overall. The Activity will promote coordination and capacity-strengthening among all stakeholders to ensure key government investments—such as Planting for Food and Jobs—achieve broad-based food security outcomes.

During this reporting period, the FtF Ghana Policy LINK Activity completed a desk review of the elements of the country's policy process. The review offers USAID, policymakers, and other stakeholders insights into policy gaps and constraints. It also recommends supporting the meaningful participation of all Ghanaian stakeholders in the policy process as part of the country's transition to a more evidence-based and inclusive policy development process. These findings provide a starting point for the Activity's six-month refine-and-implement phase and will ultimately inform the design of buy-in activities.

Read more >>

- [Ghana Activity Completes Desk Review of Policy Processes](#)
- [Ghana Policy LINK Desk Review](#)





USAID/KENYA AND EAST AFRICA

Policy LINK's East Africa buy-in, Strengthening Competitiveness in Regional Agricultural Trade, explores alternative approaches to boosting agricultural value chain competitiveness and increasing intra-regional trade.

Regional agricultural trade in East Africa is declining, despite decades of government, private sector, and donor investment. If historical trends continue, the trade of certain commodities—especially maize and other cereals—will decline significantly. This is because demand, driven by population growth, is outstripping productivity gains, reducing tradable surpluses across the region. High trading costs and cross-border trade barriers further constrain trade. Understanding and resolving these issues are priorities for USAID. They are also the focus of Policy LINK's East Africa buy-in, which explores alternative approaches to boosting agricultural value chain competitiveness and increasing intra-regional trade using a mix of analysis and stakeholder engagement.

HIGHLIGHTS THIS PERIOD

During this reporting period, Policy LINK continued to engage stakeholders in identifying the key barriers to competitive regional agricultural trade and developing viable solutions. Policy LINK convened three national dialogues; met regularly with the Strategic Partners Group, a brain trust of donors, donor implementing partners, private sector associations, and companies exploring ways to boost food security through intra-regional trade; and convened write-shops to develop solutions to pressing trade issues.

Extensive stakeholder consultations helped Policy LINK build consensus around critical issues that require action. These consultations also laid the groundwork for the co-creation of strategic solutions to improve trade competitiveness.



Number of individuals participating in
USG food security programs in FY 2022: **292**



People in
Government



People in
Civil Society



People in
Private Sector
Firms



Producers

CONVENING NATIONAL DIALOGUES



Policy LINK convened national dialogues in Kenya, Uganda, and Zambia to share and validate the buy-in's competitiveness analysis findings. Stakeholders also offered insights into how the main barriers to regional trade competitiveness play out at the country level. These consultations, which built consensus on critical issues, laid the groundwork for subsequent workshops focused on co-creating technical solutions.

Read more >>

- [Dialogue Explores Uganda's Agricultural Competitiveness](#)
- [East Africa Country Dialogue Resources](#)



3 NATIONAL DIALOGUES

organized in partnership with country stakeholders



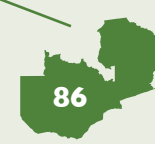
attended by more than
280 STAKEHOLDERS



Uganda



Kenya



Zambia

BUILDING AND FACILITATING THE STRATEGIC PARTNERS GROUP

Policy LINK convened three meetings of the Strategic Partners Group this reporting period. The most recent meeting (January 2022) focused on two barriers to regional trade, inadequate access to seed and the lack of common standards on safe pesticide use. Previous meetings of the Strategic Partners Group explored trade barriers related to aflatoxin in maize (November 2021) and logistics (December 2021). These discussions formed the basis of subsequent workshops focused on the development of practical technical solutions.

Read more >>

[Sowing the Seeds of Regional Agricultural Trade in East Africa](#)



CO-CREATING TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS



Drawing on the barriers to trade competitiveness identified through analysis, Strategic Partners Group meetings, and country dialogues, Policy LINK convened three workshops to co-create technical solutions. The first meeting, held in early March, focused on logistics. Subsequent workshops focused on seed and agrochemicals (a fourth workshop, on sanitary and phytosanitary standards, was organized and led by a private sector partner, the East Africa Grain Council). Generated and owned by country and regional stakeholders, the solutions offer roadmaps for addressing these issues using collaborative, evidence-based approaches.

[Read more >>](#)

[Co-Creating Solutions to Increase Trade Competitiveness in East Africa](#)



USAID/SOUTH SUDAN

Reversing the trend of top-down development, Policy LINK helps bring together local officials, community leaders, women, persons with disabilities, and youth representatives in South Sudan to prioritize local needs and plan for a more resilient future—empowering them to guide the programming of government as well as USAID and other donor implementing partners.

HIGHLIGHTS THIS PERIOD

This period, Policy LINK prioritized its engagement in counties designated by USAID as part of its Resilience Focus Zone. This engagement included a five-step process that includes stakeholder engagement, gathering evidence, sense-making workshops, local action planning, and joint work planning. For a full description of this Policy LINK methodology, please see [here](#).

In addition, the South Sudan team began developing a series of resource guides for USAID and other donor implementing partners working to enhance resilience in the country. The two guides published so far offer practical tips for working effectively in areas experiencing shocks and stressors such as drought, insecurity, and conflict.

Highlights of the South Sudan team’s engagement inside USAID’s Resilience Focus Zone are included in the following slides.

Read more >>

- [Guides Offer Resources for South Sudan Development Partners](#)
- [Guide Offers Resources for Evidence-Informed Decision-Making](#)



Number of individuals participating in
USG food security programs in FY 2022: **1,167**

156

People in
Government

825

People in
Civil Society

158

People in
Private Sector
Firms

28

Producers

JUR RIVER RECRUITMENT

Kicking off its engagement in South Sudan’s Jur River County, Policy LINK brought together local officials, community leaders, and youth representatives in an unprecedented bid to overcome longstanding divisions, paving the way for new, USAID-led resilience programming. Policy LINK’s team had recruited 27 Jur River County residents from more than 400 applications to serve as “mobilizers” and “enumerators” ahead of an ambitious community resilience mapping effort that will help improve the targeting of USAID’s investments to address vulnerability.

The group’s appointment came with the buy-in of local representatives from South Sudan’s National Bureau of Statistics, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, and Labor Office, who—together with local officials known as payam administrators—formed an “observatory team” to oversee the recruitment process. The transparency of that process, said one representative of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, has helped earn the trust of the local community, enabling further engagement with USAID.

[Read more >>](#)

[Paving the Way for USAID Support in South Sudan’s Jur River County](#)



JUR RIVER EVALUATION

Also during this period, USAID/South Sudan's third-party monitoring project gave high marks to Policy LINK for its engagement of local communities in Jur River. The feedback, part of a report submitted last month by the USAID Monitoring, Evaluation, and Support Project (MESP), followed a pair of November 2021 "sense-making" workshops facilitated by Policy LINK, at which MESP representatives observed "high participation of groups such as women, youth, community leaders, and the private sector" from two payams in Jur River. A payam is an administrative division, representing at least 25,000 people, within a county.

At the workshops, Policy LINK demonstrated its convening power, bringing together a broad range of local stakeholders to build consensus and lay the groundwork for their engagement with other USAID implementing partners. That shared agenda, according to the MESP report, is all the more important given ongoing tensions in the area. "Both Rocrocdong and Kuajiena payams of Jur River have experienced violence in the recent past," wrote the MESP observers, "and it is likely that such violence may reoccur."

[Read more >>](#)

[Policy LINK Convening Power Noted in New South Sudan Report](#)



PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIALS

In the past, NGOs used to move randomly in our villages and implemented ready programs they believed will solve community problems. Most of these failed. Now, we are all saying let those affected by the problems be the ones to tell us what should be done. If it is a women's program, women should have a say in what should be done, how, why, and for what resources.

HONORABLE JACINTO MATIA MBORO
COMMISSIONER OF WAU COUNTY

I have learnt from Policy LINK's resilience engagement activities the importance of self-reliance. After I participated in planning meetings and other workshops organized by Policy LINK and the Wau Civic Engagement Center, I decided to work for myself and not to expect too much from other people. We need to use the problem-solving skills we have learned to solve some of the shocks facing us; for example, I advised women to engage in dialogue to create understanding and avoid gender-based violence in their homes.

JULIA NATALE
A WOMEN'S REPRESENTATIVE
FROM BEGGARI PAYAM

We had [a] misconception that organizations and the government will do everything to address shocks and stressors affecting us. We now realize this is not the case. Policy LINK's approach has demonstrated that this is a joint partnership between all stakeholders and that as a community we have a leading role in addressing shocks that are facing us.

HILARY CLAUDIO
A FEMALE COMMUNITY DELEGATE
FROM BESSILIA

Policy LINK's resilience engagement activities have opened our eyes to what we can do to support ourselves, our households, and the community. After we attended the previous workshops, we went back and started doing awareness and engaged in dialogue with cattle keepers to keep their animals out of the gardens and to respect the farmers.

ISMAEL KAU
CHAIRPERSON FOR THE COMMUNITY ACTION
GROUP IN WAU NORTH

MANAGEMENT UPDATE



STAFFING

Over the past six months, Policy LINK onboarded 18 new long-term staff dedicated to country buy-ins.

In Bangladesh, the local team added eight new hires including its four Regional Program Coordinators, Finance Specialist, Procurement and Subawards Manager, new Administrative and Logistics Officer, and new Finance and Operations Director. These staff prepare the Agricultural Policy Activity to undertake an intensive series of regional workshops in FY 2022 Q1 and Q2.

The Ethiopia C4FS Activity also onboarded eight new staff members, including a Procurement and Subawards Manager, Office Cleaners, an IT Specialist, Finance and Operations Director, Administrative and Logistics Coordinator, Facilitation and Collaborative Governance Lead, and Deputy Country Lead.

Policy LINK's newest country program in Ghana hired its Finance and Operations Director and Administrative and Logistics Coordinator in FY 2022 Q2, positioning the local team to take an earlier lead on operational startup actions with support from global colleagues.

Three staff members departed within the current reporting period. Policy LINK is grateful for all of their contributions during such a formative stage of the project:

- Global Collaborative Design and Engagement Manager Cristine Geers
- Bangladesh Finance and Operations Director Assma Kakoli
- Bangladesh Administrative and Logistics Assistant Saokat Marshal



COUNTRY OFFICE START-UP AND OPERATIONS



Return to physical office and increase in travel: Due to a decline in COVID-19 cases, all Policy LINK country offices have now returned to physical office-based work; continued hybrid/partial remote working arrangements are handled on a case-by-case basis. Domestic travel has significantly increased in Bangladesh and throughout the East Africa region, and continues to be high in South Sudan.

Office Setup in Ethiopia and Bangladesh: Over the past two quarters, Policy LINK has further strengthened its office

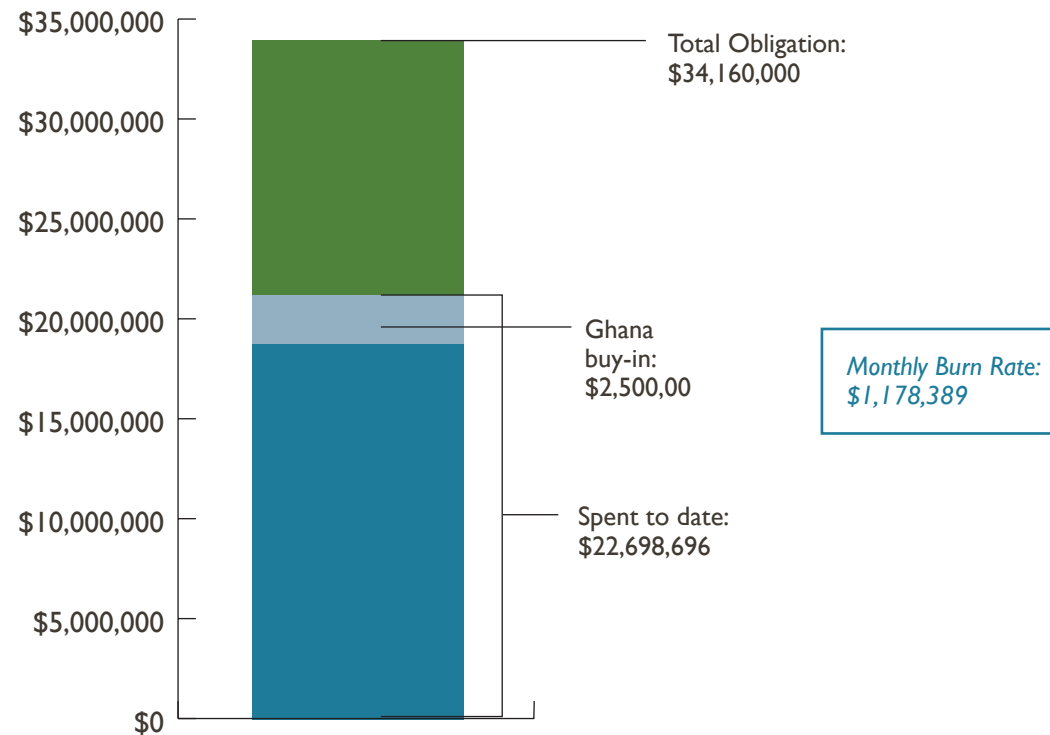
infrastructure and operating services in Bangladesh and Ethiopia, including at a regional level in Bangladesh. In Ethiopia, due to a smaller regional footprint, the team plans to co-locate with stakeholders and partners once regional staff recruitment has concluded.

Office Startup in Ghana: In November 2021, Policy LINK received funding for its newest buy-in program in Ghana. Staff are currently working from the new office, located within walking distance to the US Embassy, and the team expects all office operating infrastructure to be fully set up in the coming quarter.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

In the October 2021—March 2022 period, Policy LINK received its first funding obligation for the new Ghana buy-in program in the amount of \$2,500,000, bringing the total obligation on the project to \$34,160,000.

As of March 31, 2022, Policy LINK has expended \$22,698,696.45 of its obligation, with an average project burn rate of \$1,178,389.66 per month during the past six months.



MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES AND LEARNING

Policy LINK continues to heavily emphasize regular check-ins and learning exchanges, within and across country programs. In the past six months, the project has launched a “peer learning” program to provide support to new staff with comparable functional responsibilities working across different geographies.

In Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Ghana, the long-term funding trajectory, staffing needs, and regional footprint continue to evolve. In all three contexts, the project has prioritized strengthening engagement with regional stakeholders who were previously excluded from policymaking. However, the design of each intervention—for example, where to physically post full-time staff focused on stakeholder engagement—is contingent on projected near-term and life-of-program funding, security constraints, and other operating realities. The three teams regularly conduct budget and operations management reassessments to ensure that resources are appropriately allocated to maximize program impact under changing circumstances.

