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PSDAG Learning Series

Public-Private Dialogue

Photo: USAID/Rwanda PSDAG Project

The Rwanda Private Sector Driven Agricultural Growth program (PSDAG) is a five-year (2014-2019) USAID-funded effort. The goal of PSDAG is to increase smallholder incomes by promoting private sector investments – internationally and domestically – that contribute to the Government of Rwanda’s Vision 2020 aim of transforming agriculture into a market-oriented, competitive, and high-value sector.

Currently in its fifth year of implementation, and in order to ensure a smooth transition of project activities to partners, PSDAG is holding a series of **learning events** aimed at **sharing successes, lessons learned, tools and templates, and curricula** with a comprehensive group of public, private, and donor stakeholders within the Rwandan agriculture sector.

In Rwanda, there is a need for more focused partnership between the government and the private sector in order to improve the conditions and outcomes that can help spur investment in agriculture. In the past, dialogue and consultation between the Government of Rwanda (GOR) and the private sector have been sporadic and ad hoc; there is a need for a more sustainable, established arrangement for public-private collaboration in the agriculture sector. The PSDAG project has therefore worked with stakeholders to improve and institutionalize approaches and platforms for public-private dialogue as a mechanism to establish a joint vision for and ownership of the nation’s development goals.

Major lessons learned from PSDAG’s experience designing, implementing, and monitoring outcomes of public-private dialogue are outlined in this learning brief.

LESSON 1

In order to foster buy-in from government and bring about actionable outcomes, PPDs must be well-researched in advance. Private sector should come prepared with evidence and well-researched recommendations.

LESSON 2

PPD should be bottom-up instead of top-down; to the extent possible, the PPD process should identify, vet, and troubleshoot issues at the local level, elevating to national level only those issues that are recurrent.

LESSON 3

While there is enthusiasm for PPD in Rwanda, there is a lack ownership and financial resources committed. PPD should be embedded in permanent institutions with financial sustainability plans.

LESSON 4

Resolutions from PPD take time and moving from discussion to outcomes requires patience and follow-through in equal measure. Dialogues should always include good M&E and outreach plans.

Agri-PPD Goals

When the PSDAG project began, the ongoing, government-led Rwanda Public-Private Dialogue (RPPD) process included neither an agriculture-specific PPD agenda nor an organizational framework for managing such an agenda. The goal of PSDAG's PPD activities was to set up agribusiness-specific processes, activities, goals, and feedback systems to improve alignment between private sector needs and public sector policies and initiatives.

Agri-PPD Process

In recognition of the distinct and important roles that public and private sector entities have to play in public-private dialogue and business-enabling environment issues, PSDAG engaged with both private sector and GOR stakeholders to design and institutionalize PPD for agriculture in Rwanda at both the national and local levels, as described below.

Private sector-initiated PPD: Private associations have an important role to play in bringing different public and private actors together and aligning disparate policies and initiatives. Therefore, it is important to support strong associations that have the capacity to convene the relevant stakeholders and effectively advocate for change. PSDAG has facilitated this by working with the Rwandan Chamber of Agriculture and Livestock (RCAL) within the Private Sector Federation to institutionalize a PPD framework, and by building the institutional capacity of RCAL and other associations to conduct additional GOR advocacy and member support functions.

Public sector-initiated PPD: In addition to increasing the ability of private sector associations and businesses to advocate for new or improved regulations, PSDAG also supported GOR institutions such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI), Rwanda Standards Board (RSB), and the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM) to organize consultative processes with the private sector to validate key current and planned policies related to agriculture. For example, before the GOR ratified the Strategic Plan for the Transformation of Agriculture Four (PSTA IV), PSDAG supported MINAGRI to convene a verification workshop with almost 100 private sector stakeholders.

Results

Over the course of the project, PSDAG has facilitated the drafting, analysis, approval, and implementation of 14 agricultural enabling environment policies at the national level. At the local level, civil society organization representing the private sector held 20 dialogues to discuss 37 issues. As a result, 127 resolutions were made, of which, 36 have already been implemented. During that process, the project and its partners engaged more than 1,400 public and private sector stakeholders, 96 percent of whom reported feeling that the consultative process was effective in soliciting and utilizing their input.

These dialogues are leading to real change; PSDAG supported RCAL to conduct local Agri-PPD on the dairy sector and milk collection centers (MCCs). The PPDs revealed that producers and businesses were not complying with MINAGRI rules on milk collection and sales due to the limited number of MCCs and unreliable water and electricity. The PSDAG-facilitated PPD led to electrification plans for existing MCCs, and the construction of two additional collection centers.

Selected key lessons learned based on challenges that arose during implementation of the PSDAG public-private dialogue activities are highlighted at left.