

WEMA 2010 Social Audit Report

Ethical, Social, Cultural and Commercialization (ESC²) Audit Report
for the Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA) Project, 2010

Ethical, Social, Cultural and Commercialization Program
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INTRODUCTION

The Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA) project seeks to bring drought-resistant maize varieties to five African countries (Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda), royalty-free by 2018. In doing so, WEMA faces issues of public trust that are uniquely associated with complex public-private partnerships (PPPs) that involve the development of genetically modified (GM) crops. There are ethical and commercialization concerns related to past behaviour of biotechnology companies, and well-known social and cultural sensitivities surrounding GM crops. Such concerns lead to diminished trust on the part of stakeholders and the public, and could pose a significant barrier to the achievement of WEMA's humanitarian goals.

The Ethical, Social, Cultural and Commercialization (ESC²) Program at the McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health (MRC), University Health Network and University of Toronto, conducted a second annual independent social audit of the WEMA project in 2010. A social audit can be defined as a process whereby an audit team collects, analyses and interprets descriptive, quantitative and qualitative information from stakeholders to produce an account of a project's ESC² performance and impact. The goal of this process is to help foster improved management practices, accountability and transparency, which in turn will help to build trust among the partners in the WEMA project, and between WEMA and the public.

In October 2009 we conducted the first social audit of the WEMA project, with a social audit report released in February 2010. We used an ESC² framework and qualitative and quantitative interview tools that had been developed and piloted over the previous year with internal and external stakeholders of the WEMA project. We conducted 100 interviews across the five WEMA countries about ESC² issues in the WEMA project. We also reviewed key documents, and observed project meetings and interaction of project staff. The data collected was analyzed and reported in the 2009 Social Audit Report. The report was distributed and presented to WEMA management and stakeholders, and shared publicly on the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) Web site. Recommendations made in the 2009 Social Audit Report were responded to by WEMA management, and some were incorporated into WEMA project plans for 2010.

In this report, we focus on the 2010 Social Audit, conducted between August and October, 2010. Where appropriate, we draw comparisons between findings of the two social audits.

HOW WE CONDUCTED THE 2010 SOCIAL AUDIT

In the 2010 Social Audit, the ESC² team (Appendix 1) evaluated WEMA's performance using a range of lenses from the ESC² analytical framework (including technical, regulatory, deployment, capacity building, charitable purpose, communication, and project management, and governance). Viewpoints of 100 stakeholders of the WEMA project, from across the five WEMA countries (Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda) were collected using a quantitative questionnaire and a qualitative interview guide. The stakeholders were from a wide range of stakeholder groups (Figure 1), included 83 percent repeat respondents from the 2009 Social Audit, and 25 percent of respondents were selected from WEMA country teams. Observation of project meetings and stakeholder interactions were also carried out. All data was analyzed, and is presented here as actionable key findings.

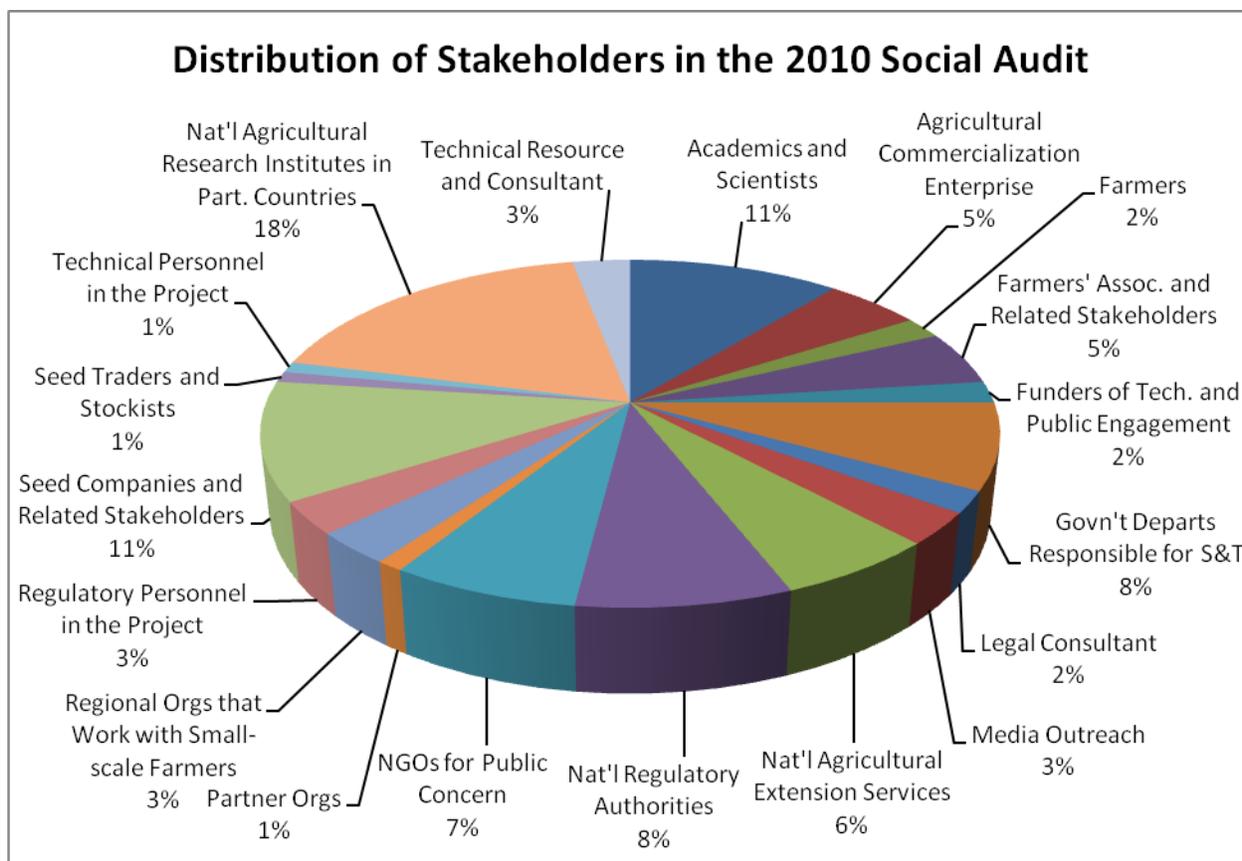


FIGURE 1: STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED IN THE 2010 SOCIAL AUDIT N=100

KEY FINDINGS

The 2010 Social Audit key findings are based on stakeholder interviews conducted in 2010, across the five WEMA countries (Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda), and are compared with key findings from the 2009 Social Audit. There are eight overall key findings and seven country-specific key findings presented as actionable results.

OVERALL ESC² EVALUATION OF THE WEMA PROJECT REMAINS 'GOOD'

WEMA stakeholders believe that ESC² issues continue to be adequately addressed in the project, with an average rating of 'good' in 2009 and 2010. This finding was fairly consistently across the five WEMA countries in 2010, with the exception of South Africa, which reported a slightly higher average rating. National Agricultural Research Institutes in Participating Countries gave among the highest average rating in 2010, and the greatest improvement was seen among Academics and Scientists. This may be attributed to these stakeholder groups' increased ability to conceptualize how their interests can align with the project as it progresses.

Seed Companies and Related Stakeholders and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) for Public Concern gave the lowest average rating, possibly due to their limited involvement in the

project at this stage in the development. The greatest decline in average rating was seen among Regulatory Personnel in the Project and Media Outreach.

SELF-REPORTED KNOWLEDGE OF THE WEMA PROJECT HAS IMPROVED IN ALL FIVE COUNTRIES

There was an improvement in average rating of self-reported knowledge by WEMA stakeholders in all five countries, with the greatest increase in Uganda, followed by Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, and Kenya. Internal stakeholders reported higher ratings than external stakeholders. Improved knowledge of the WEMA project was attributed to individual efforts by stakeholders to follow up on WEMA activities through communication materials and with the WEMA country teams; efforts by the WEMA project to inform and update stakeholders on WEMA activities in workshops, training activities and feedback on project and country updates; and indirect efforts by external, affiliated research and agricultural organizations, to circulate WEMA update materials.

Beneficiaries of such efforts were mainly internal stakeholders, who participated in training exercises, workshops, field visits, and study tours. Some interviewees expressed optimism that improving their knowledge through such activities can help to dispel fear and skepticism of the project for stakeholders, while others, particularly in Tanzania and South Africa, reported they did not feel adequately engaged through interactions or project updates, and that their knowledge of the project had not changed. Lower ratings by Seed Companies may be of interest to WEMA in preparation for deployment of WEMA seed.

INTERACTIONS AMONG WEMA PARTNERS IS 'VERY GOOD' BUT MORE INCLUSION OF THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SYSTEMS (NARS) IS NEEDED

Interaction among partners of the WEMA project was rated on average as 'very good', which was an improvement from the 2009 average rating. A number of external interviewees attributed progress made in the project to the positive relationships among the partners. Many internal interviewees suggested partners are working well together, though some, particularly from the NARS, said that there is a lack of transparency and equality among the partners in regard to information sharing with the NARS. They believed this was due to the lack of involvement of the NARS at the time of project planning, and the fact that they only began participating at the time of implementation. Other stakeholders suggested that since the NARS are not represented in the Operations Subcommittee, as are the other partners in the project, that their equality in the partnership is compromised.

COMMUNICATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS HAS IMPROVED, PARTICULARLY IN MOZAMBIQUE

WEMA stakeholders evaluated WEMA's communication strategy as having improved from 2009. This was fairly consistent across the WEMA countries, in 2010, with the greatest improvement of rating in Mozambique. WEMA stakeholders reported effectiveness in WEMA's communication efforts to circulate email newsletters, distribute brochures through third-party agricultural organizations, and include some stakeholder groups in meetings and workshops. An

internal interviewee from Mozambique commended WEMA on improved communication efforts through television, print media, and provincial offices of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Stakeholders from National Agricultural Research Institutes in Participating Countries gave some of the highest average ratings of the WEMA communication strategy. This may be due to this stakeholder groups' direct involvement in the project activities. NGOs for Public Concern, Media Outreach, and Academics and Scientists (who also reported moderate knowledge improvement about the WEMA project), gave lower ratings of WEMA's communication strategy.

WEMA COMMUNICATION COULD RESPOND TO A WIDER RANGE OF STAKEHOLDERS IN A MORE TAILORED FASHION

WEMA stakeholders acknowledged how WEMA has successfully shared information about the project and engaged them in the development process. They also provided suggestions for how WEMA communications can be improved. Stakeholders in Mozambique and Kenya acknowledged some effort by the WEMA project to engage farmers' associations, as was suggested by stakeholders in the 2009 Social Audit. However, other stakeholders across the five WEMA countries commented on the need to broaden this engagement, and bring on board a wider range of stakeholder groups (i.e., seed companies, policy makers, agricultural extension services, technical and resource consultants, small-scale farmers and more farmers' associations). Greater stakeholder participation in on-site visits was requested in Kenya, while the media in Uganda and Mozambique were reported being regularly informed and afforded opportunities to visit trial sites and cover WEMA activities.

More direct and engaging delivery of information to stakeholders was suggested, including WEMA activity updates and briefs, provided in regular, personalized, and audience and context-specific ways to ensure relevance to stakeholder groups. WEMA communication was found by some stakeholders in Uganda and Mozambique to be elitist, one-way, and unresponsive to stakeholder requests for information. Addressing the interests and concerns of Maize Processors/Millers remained among the lowest ratings of WEMA communication, and was considered less effective than in 2009 for Seed Companies and Related Stakeholders. This may be due to the fact that neither of these stakeholder groups has yet been targeted in WEMA's communication strategy.

THERE REMAINS A NEED FOR WEMA TO CAPITALIZE ON THE POTENTIAL FOR SYNERGY AND SUPPORT FROM A WIDER RANGE OF STAKEHOLDER ORGANIZATIONS

In 2009 there were calls for WEMA to collaborate with farmers' associations and biotechnology awareness organizations to benefit from their abilities, particularly in awareness creation about WEMA. This call was repeated in 2010, now including suggestions from seed companies and farmers' associations to engage them further. These experts are willing to share their first-hand field experience, which may be useful in steering the project forward. One stakeholder said it is the seed companies and farmers' associations that drive change and social entrepreneurship, which are important catalysts for the implementation of WEMA project.

Stakeholders commented on a lack of efforts to engage seed companies, and how these companies may not show interest should their involvement come later in the project's development. Seed companies in Kenya are considered to have sufficient capacity, and would

like to be more actively involved, to understand the WEMA development processes from early on.

ROYALTY-FREE ASPECT OF WEMA IS CONSIDERED ADVANTAGEOUS, BUT STAKEHOLDERS NEED MORE INFORMATION ABOUT IT

Stakeholders across the board lauded the royalty-free aspect of WEMA, saying this offers the possibility of affordable seed, and this is likely to be an incentive for the adoption of the technology.

WEMA management responded to the issue raised in the 2009 Social Audit regarding stakeholder requests for clarification about the royalty-free aspect of WEMA and intellectual property rights (IPRs) by posting a summary of the Project Collaboration Agreement and Intellectual Property Rights and Licensing on the WEMA website. In 2010, the aspect of IPRs and products of research was mentioned again by some stakeholders, primarily in the seed industry. Questions arose about whether the royalty-free agreement was likely to lower the cost of the seed and be available to the public, what the licensing rights to the technology involve, what the trade-offs for royalty-free seed would be, and whether it would be practical for seed companies to take up the royalty-free WEMA seed in the competitive seed market.

Stakeholders are also looking for an explanation of how the IPR issues relate to further research, and what components of the technology attract IPRs. There is need for clarity on the IPR issues in regard to the introgression of genes in local Tanzanian germplasm, and the sustainability of the royalty-free aspect beyond the project life. Other stakeholders expressed the need for WEMA maize to be stacked with additional traits, such as improved protein content and pest and disease resistance.

THERE IS NEED FOR ENHANCED CAPACITY BUILDING OF THE NARS AND AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICES

Stakeholders appreciate the technical research and human capacity being created throughout the development of WEMA seed with hands-on training and funding to the scientific community. However, requests by stakeholders in the 2009 Social Audit for WEMA to enhance its capacity building efforts in the NARS were repeated in the 2010 audit. Stakeholders in all five WEMA countries commented on the limited human resource capacity of the NARS. A high turnover of technical staff that has been experienced in the project is said to be exerting pressure on the remaining staff who are involved in other job-related activities with their respective employers¹.

To ensure sustainability of the project and the technology, stakeholders suggested that the capacity of the agricultural extension staff will also need to be built up. Stakeholders indicated that there is a need for greater information sharing about WEMA technology and improved seed varieties with farmers by agricultural extension staff.

¹ Several of WEMA country team members are engaged in other related activities (technical or administrative) with their respective employers. A number of them are also engaged in other agro-biotechnology work such as cassava research in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania; Bt cotton research in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania; and Bt maize in Kenya and South Africa, and others. All of these engagements strain their commitment in WEMA, at the time of staff turnover.

COUNTRY SPECIFIC KEY FINDINGS

KENYA

THERE EXISTS A FAVOURABLE REGULATORY AND POLITICAL CLIMATE TO SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENT THE PROJECT

Some WEMA stakeholders believe that the WEMA project should take advantage of the current political and regulatory climate that is in favor of GM crops. It was suggested that WEMA transparently addresses the lingering controversial issues around the implementation of WEMA seed, such as biosafety and ownership of the technology.

MOZAMBIQUE

GREATER INTERACTION WITH REGULATORS RESPONSIBLE FOR SEED RELEASE IS NEEDED

Internal regulatory stakeholders of the WEMA project from the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Science and Technology believe the relationship between WEMA and regulatory personnel is going well. Other stakeholders suggest that there is a need for greater and earlier involvement of regulatory bodies in the project, and suggest sharing of information between countries on how best to maneuver through the regulatory environment to ease the approval process, at the time of seed release.

SOUTH AFRICA

ADDRESSING THE ANTI-GMO MOVEMENT PRIOR TO DEPLOYMENT MAY HELP REDUCE UNFAVOURABLE REACTION TO WEMA

The anti-GMO movement in South Africa was described by many stakeholders as an ongoing resistance and potential barrier to successful outcomes of the WEMA project (i.e., pre-harvest protest at the confined field trials in Lutzville). Preventive measures to protect the work being done in the project both in terms of advocacy and security were considered necessary in early stages of the project, though it was not clear whether the anti-GMO movement is currently affecting policy decisions, or will affect the adoption of WEMA seed.

FUNDING AND FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE NEXT PHASE OF PROJECT SHOULD BE DECIDED EARLY

Some stakeholders commented that the undecided financial responsibility for breeding and the funding for phase II should be decided upon early on, to ensure achievement of project goals and successful delivery of the WEMA seed.

TANZANIA

A STRICT LIABILITY CLAUSE IN BIOSAFETY REGULATIONS IS LIKELY TO BE A HINDERANCE TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WEMA PROJECT

Stakeholders pointed out that the current environmental law in Tanzania includes a strict liability clause for technology providers which unless repealed is likely to be a hindrance to the implementation of the WEMA project. The contentious clause holds technology developers and their partners liable for any adverse effects of the technology, thus deterring would-be investors.

UGANDA

ABSENCE OF A COMPREHENSIVE BIOSAFETY LAW COULD HINDER THE PROGRESSION OF WEMA PROJECT TO COMMERCIALIZATION

A number of stakeholders interviewed in Uganda expressed fears that the absence of a comprehensive legal framework may be a roadblock to implementation of WEMA project. Some stakeholders reported that the biosafety bill was stuck in the legislative process, and further delayed by elections scheduled for early 2011. Stakeholders suggested that there is no political champion in place to engage the political class and that there is anxiety that the enormous investment in the project may go to waste because of the absence of appropriate biosafety laws. Stakeholders wanted to know whether WEMA is working with committees of parliament, National Resistance Movement Caucus, and Uganda National Farmers' Federation (UNFFE) to move the biosafety law forward.

WEMA IS ACTIVELY ENGAGING AND INFORMING JOURNALISTS

Contrary to the finding in the 2009 Social Audit Report, in which the media expressed concerns that "WEMA scientists may keep information to themselves until there is a breakthrough," some journalists from Uganda, applauded the efforts by WEMA management to engage and inform them, and include them in project activities. They have visited the confined field trial sites and attended workshops organized by WEMA, and suggest that more attention should be given to regularly informing and engaging them and other media personnel.

APPENDIX 1: SOCIAL AUDIT TEAM

NAME	INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION	CATEGORY OF MEMBERSHIP	REGIONAL AFFILIATION
Abdallah Daar	McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health	Co-Principal Investigator	Canada/Tanzania
Jennifer Deadman	McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health	Research Analyst	Canada
Obidimma Ezezika	McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health	Program Leader	Canada/Nigeria
Justin Mabeya	McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health	Consultant	Kenya
Peter A. Singer	McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health	Co-Principal Investigator	Canada

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