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African Organizations Demand Answers from AGRA

To: Andrew Cox, Chief of Staff and Strategy, Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)
From: Muketoi Wamunyima, Country Coordinator, PELUM-Zambia;
Anne Maina, BIBA-Kenya; Nnimmo Bassey, HOMEF, Nigeria
Date: September 7th, 2020

Re: Requesting substantive responses to “False Promises” report

Dear Mr. Cox,

As African networks two of which co-published and provided research for the report, [“False Promises: The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa \(AGRA\),”](#) we are writing to publicly request substantive responses to the report’s findings. We have been disappointed in AGRA’s responses to date. [AGRA’s brief official response](#) to the study issued the day after the report was published attacked the integrity of the report’s researchers and refused to provide any evidence to refute the study’s findings that AGRA and the larger Green Revolution project are failing to meet its goals of doubling yields and incomes for 30 million small-scale farming households by 2020 while reducing food insecurity by half.

AGRA’s response also ignored the important role of the five African organizations that contributed to the study, attributing the research just to “Tufts University researchers” and the publication to one German organization rather than the nine organizations that published it. PELUM Zambia and BIBA-Kenya, which collaborated on the report and carried out case study research, strongly object to AGRA’s discounting of African farmer organizations’ role in this work.

We were further disappointed to learn that you refused to provide substantive responses when lead researcher Timothy A. Wise contacted you last month. Responses in the media by you and others at AGRA have been similarly evasive. AGRA refused our researcher’s requests early in the project to provide its own data on impacts. We used national-level data for AGRA countries because AGRA refused to provide data on its beneficiaries. AGRA’s goal of reaching 30 million smallholder households means that its target audience represents the vast majority of farming households in its focus countries. Progress would be reflected in national-level data. The data itself is from FAO and the World Bank. We supplemented that desk research with case studies on Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Mali.





We carried out the study because we are concerned about a consistent lack of transparency and accountability from AGRA, which has received roughly \$1 billion in funding since 2006.

We write now to respectfully ask that AGRA provide substantive responses to the findings in the “False Promises” report. We request that AGRA make available any assessments of its progress toward achieving the goals in its 2017-2021 strategic plan and any survey data from its own monitoring and evaluation at country level. And we ask that AGRA specifically address the following findings from the “False Promises” report:

1. We found very little evidence that AGRA is benefiting 30 million smallholder households, and that it is likely benefiting larger-scale commercial farmers, mostly men, rather than smallholder women farmers.
 - a. How many farmers have benefited directly from AGRA’s interventions? The stated goal is 9 million.
 - b. How many have benefited indirectly? The goal is 21 million.
 - c. What evidence is there that women and smallholders are the primary beneficiaries of AGRA’s programs?
2. The stated goal is to double productivity for these farmers by 2020. We found no evidence that AGRA will meet this goal in any of its 13 target countries. Even for maize, a priority crop for AGRA and for African government input subsidy programs, yields increased only 29% over 12 years, far short of the goal of a 100% increase. Overall, yields for a basket of staple crops increased just 18% with some crops experiencing declines.
 - a. What evidence can AGRA offer that productivity has increased significantly across a range of staple food crops?
3. We found that AGRA and other Green Revolution programs were creating unsustainable extensification of production (especially maize production) onto new lands rather than the stated goal of promoting “sustainable intensification” through raising productivity on existing agricultural lands.
 - a. What evidence can AGRA provide that its initiatives are not resulting in unsustainable extensification to grow favored crops on new land?
4. We found no evidence that farmer incomes are increasing significantly, never mind doubling for 30 million smallholder households. We found case study evidence that farmers have found themselves in debt after purchasing Green Revolution inputs on credit.
 - a. What evidence shows that AGRA’s productivity increases have increased farmer incomes significantly?
 - b. Can AGRA provide data on farmer impacts from loan schemes for input purchases that may result in farmers falling into debt when yields and incomes do not increase?



5. We found disturbing evidence of a worsening of food insecurity across AGRA countries, with a 31% increase in the number of undernourished people since 2006. In nine of AGRA's 13 target countries the number of undernourished people increased. (In four of those, yields for staple crops decreased!)
 - a. What evidence is there that food insecurity has been reduced among smallholder farming households?
 - b. What evidence can AGRA offer to counter our finding that nutritional diversity is declining with the decrease in crop diversity, as maize and other favored crops come to replace millet, sorghum, sweet potato, and other climate-resilient nutritious crops traditionally grown by farmers?
6. AGRA recently removed its ambitious goals from its website ([see page taken down in June](#)). We concluded that this was an indication that AGRA was failing to achieve its goals.
 - a. Has AGRA abandoned its goals to double yields and incomes for 30 million smallholder households while halving food insecurity?
 - b. What are AGRA's current goals for improving productivity, incomes, and food security, and for how many farmers?

African farmers deserve a substantive response from AGRA to the findings in the report. So, do AGRA's public sector donors, who would seem to be getting a very poor return on their investments. African governments also need to provide a clear accounting for the impacts of their own budget outlays that support Green Revolution programs.

We publish this request in the interest of furthering transparency and accountability. We were disappointed to see your response in the media that AGRA is increasing its investment in public relations. This suggests that AGRA is more concerned with its image than it is with providing accountability for its work. We hope this request can refocus this important discussion on AGRA's 14-year record in increasing productivity, incomes, and food security for smallholder farmers in Africa.

Signed:

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