

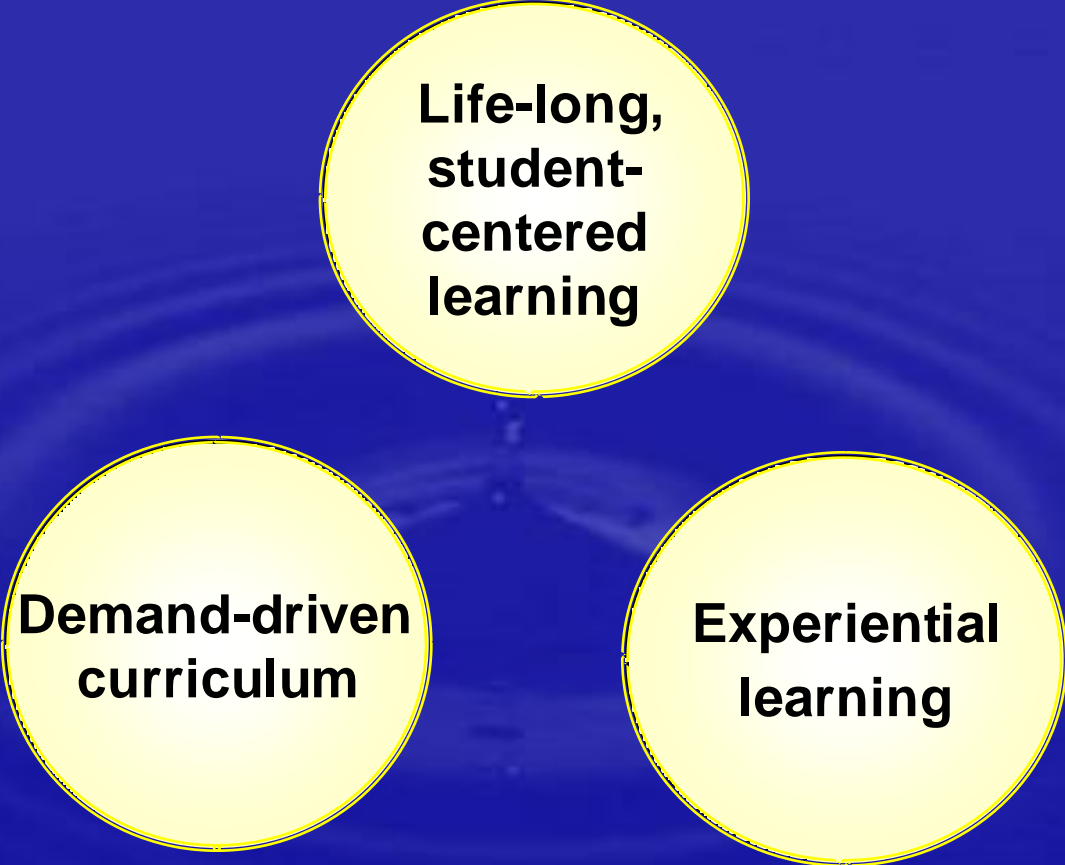


**An Innovative Training Initiative**

# Background of the SAFE Initiative

- SAFE is a product of two development imperatives:
  - ✓ To bring African agricultural universities and colleges more squarely into the process of agricultural and rural development by offering new innovative continuing education programs (B.Sc. and Diploma);
  - ✓ To expand and strengthen the skills of agricultural and rural development workers (average 5 years of field experience) to serve the needs of smallholder farm families.

# The main pillars of the SAFE's initiative are:



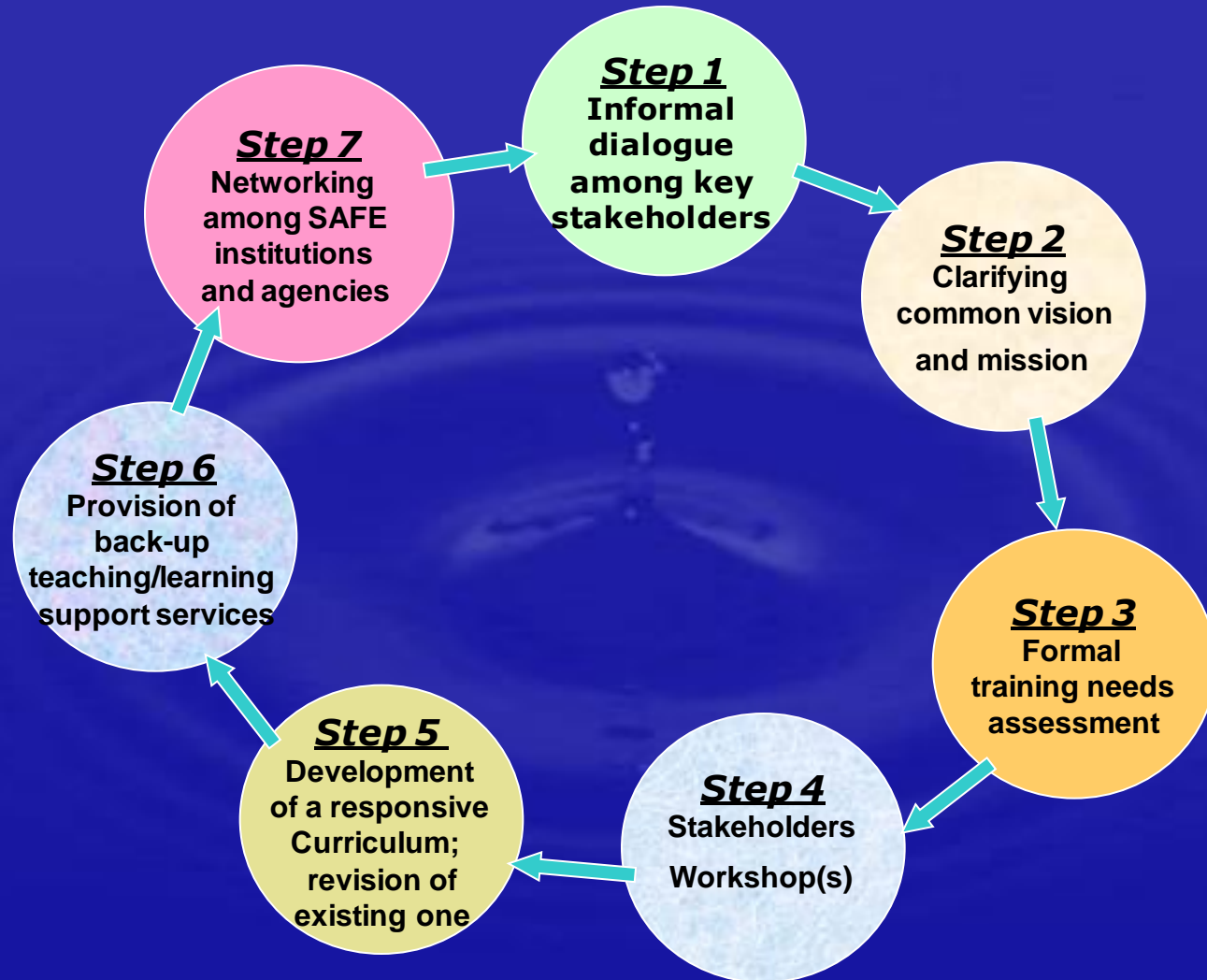
The diagram consists of three yellow circles with black outlines, arranged in a triangle. The top circle is centered above the other two. The bottom-left circle is to the left of the bottom-right circle. All three circles are connected to a central point by thin lines, forming a triangular structure. The text inside each circle is in bold black font.

**Life-long,  
student-  
centered  
learning**

**Demand-driven  
curriculum**

**Experiential  
learning**

# Major steps in curriculum development and reform process



# SAFE's Experience so far

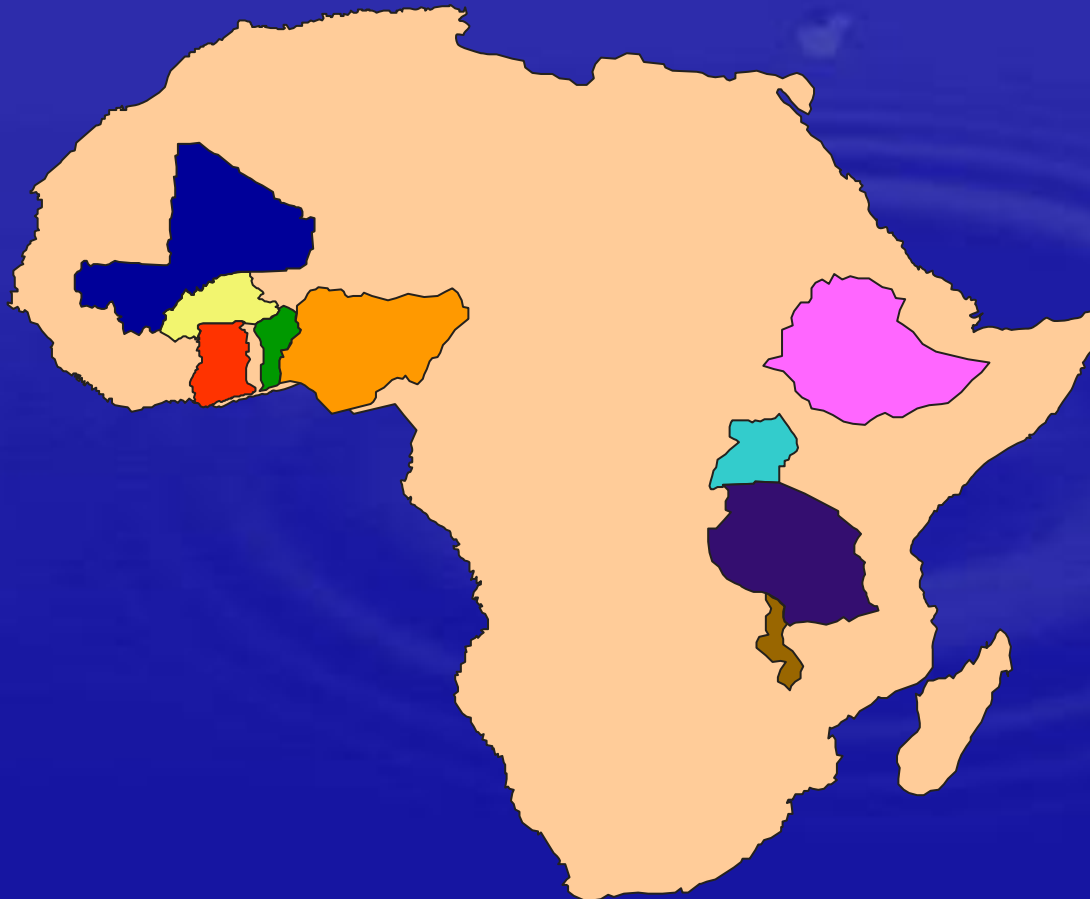
SAFE has been successful in demonstrating that:

- Employers can and should influence the design and implementation of curricula of universities and colleges to make the training more responsive to the needs of the society.
- Universities and colleges can and should respond to the demands of the larger society – contrary to the “ivory tower” stigma that usually characterizes institutions of higher learning.

- Mid-career extension professionals represent underutilized sources of information and catalysts for agricultural and rural development.
- Field experience can enrich curricula and teaching at universities/colleges, by providing unique opportunities for lecturers to learn from real life situations.

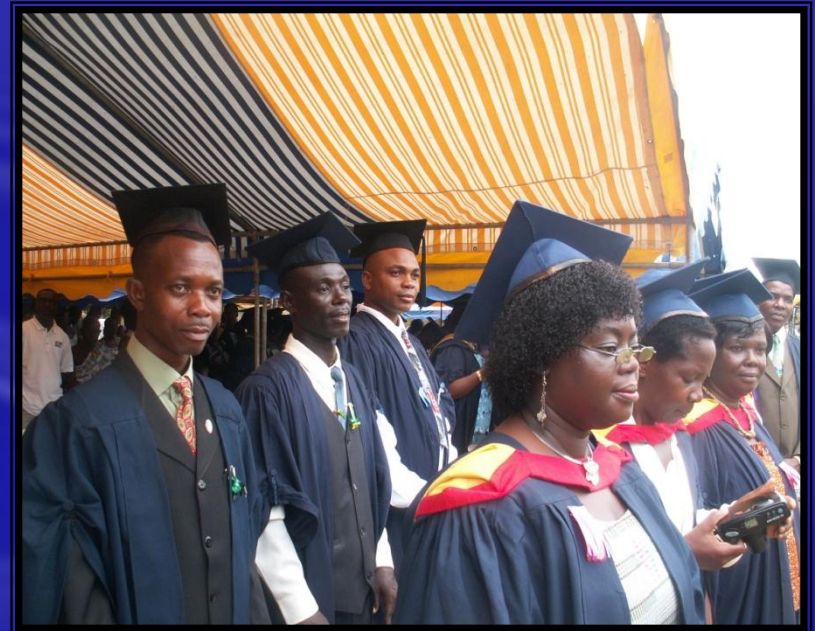
# Impacts of the SAFE Initiative

- SAFE has expanded from a modest pilot program in Ghana in 1993 to 14 programs in 9 countries in 2010 and .....to 16 in 2011.



Ghana
Ethiopia
Uganda
Tanzania
Mali
Nigeria
Burkina Faso
Benin
Malawi

- By May 2010, 1,939 (528 diploma holders) mid-career extension staff had benefited from the SAFE initiative, including (22% females). About 104 scholarships



*Photos: Left are graduates of SAFE ABU (Nigeria) and right are graduates of SAFE UCC (Ghana).*



# Impact cont'd

- Graduates now holding key leadership positions in their respective countries.
- SAFE has received many commendations from individuals and organizations, both within and outside Africa, for being one of the few initiatives that is at the cutting-edge in terms of helping to solve the pervasive problem of low level of training of extension field staff in Africa.

## Impact cont'd

- Participating universities/colleges have adapted the SAFE model to launch new programs.
- SAFE has facilitated the establishment of MOUs between participating SAFE institutions.



L-R: The V-C of Bayero Univ. Kano (BUK), Nigeria and the Director of SAFE signing the MOU for start of SAFE B.Sc. Extension Programme at BUK in 2007.

# **SAFE has achieved these through:**

- Serving as a catalyst in the change process.
- Assisting in assessing training needs.
- Assisting employers to articulate their training needs to universities and colleges.
- Sensitizing universities/colleges to develop and offer more responsive training programs for mid-career extension staff.
- Assisting in designing responsive curricula that are relevant to real-life problems.

- Providing basic resources to kick-start programs.
- Assisting participating institutions to adopt innovative and student-centred modes of teaching and learning.
- Posting an Agricultural Extension Specialists to new host institutions to participate in curriculum development and revitalization, teaching, monitoring and evaluation activities in the initial years of the program.

- Strengthening linkages between stakeholders, especially amongst participating SAFE training institutions.
- Dynamic leaders with a clear vision (V-Cs, Deans, HODs) and committed lecturers at participating SAFE institutions have also been key actors for the positive evolution of the SAFE initiative in Africa.

# Challenges of the SAFE Initiative

- How to adjust to rapid changes in institutional environment in which extension functions (e.g. privatization of public extension services).
- High demand for admission into the programs.
- Inability to cope with high demand for new programs.

# Challenges Cont'd

- Inadequate domestic and external resources for sustaining the programs.
- Stressful travels for supervision of students' field projects due to poor road condition and transportation facilities.
- Inadequate female candidates for admission into the programs.

# The Way Forward

- SAFE intends to broaden its scope to develop skills in farm management and agro-processing, value chain enhancement, communication/IT systems, micro and small enterprise development and other emerging new areas of study in agriculture whenever possible.





- **SAFE will continue to facilitate the forging of networks between participating SAFE institutions and stakeholders.**
- **Forge linkages with training institutions out of Africa (Asia, Europe, USA).**
- **SAFE will continue to strengthen SAFE alumni associations and networks in each SAFE program country.**



- Form alliance with bilateral and international organizations to consolidate and expand the impacts of the SAFE initiative.
- Transform a number of African universities/colleges into Regional Centers of Excellence for training in Agricultural Extension and Rural development.
- Invest resources in training core lecturers at Ph.D level to nurture and sustain programs.

# Conclusion

- Investing in human resource is one of the surest and most effective means of ensuring long-term sustainable agricultural development and food security in Africa.
- Agricultural extension professionals have a critical role to play in achieving sustainable agricultural and rural development.
- The challenge is that more than 75% of the estimated 150,000 agricultural extension staff in Africa are poorly trained.

- Universities, governments, and donors should remain engaged in building the capacity of agricultural extension professionals.
- The case for investing in human resource capacity for effective agricultural extension in Africa is a powerful one.
- The SAFE initiative is just one “safe step” in helping to overcome this formidable challenge.