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St. Paul, Minn. – Macalester geography professor William Moseley is part of a research team of five people who have received a five-year, $480K grant from the National Science Foundation to study the New Green Revolution for Africa and its impact on women farmers and food security. This grant will focus on three countries, Mozambique, Cote d'Ivoire and Mali. Moseley will be responsible for the fieldwork in Mali.

Food insecurity, especially in rural sub-Saharan Africa, is one of the most serious challenges facing humankind. Last year, 805 million people suffered from chronic hunger, with the greatest malnutrition rates in rural sub-Saharan Africa.

To address this issue, aid agencies, philanthropic foundations, and African governments have launched a multi-billion dollar effort to catalyze a "Green Revolution for Africa" (GR4A), which aims to increase smallholder farmer participation in input and output markets on the grounds that expected higher incomes will enhance rural food security.

In Africa, women make up the majority of the continent’s farmers and have the primary responsibility for feeding the family. GR4A initiatives increasingly seek to integrate women farmers into agricultural value chains, or the series of activities that create and build value at each step of the production process.

This study offers an urgently needed analysis of this approach to food security through a comparative study of GR4A projects in Cote d’Ivoire, Mali, and Mozambique. Moseley will direct the fieldwork in Mali, a country where he began working in 1987as a Peace Corps volunteer, Tom Bassett (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign) in Côte d’Ivoire, and Heidi Gengenbach (University of Massachusetts, Boston) in Mozambique.

"The concerted push by donors and private sector actors to commercialize food crop production in Africa is dramatically transforming rural livelihoods, yet with little knowledge of the impacts on women's and children's nutrition,” said Moseley. “I’m keen to document these changes in Mali and to understand the dynamics behind them."

The team is made up of lead researcher Rachel Schurman, University of Minnesota, William G. Moseley, Macalester College, Thomas J. Bassett, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Heidi Gengenbach, University of Massachusetts, Boston, and William Munro, Illinois Wesleyan University.

Ultimately, the team and their study seek to understand whether increased market integration and use of GR4A technologies actually lead to enhanced crop productivity, farmer income, and nutritional well-being for participating female farmers and their households, and if so, why.

The project will deliver highly policy-relevant knowledge by demonstrating whether and how the "woman-farmer-centered" agricultural value chain approach works in practice, and if the evidence supports donor enthusiasm about predicted nutritional outcomes for farming households.

Because the project team will interview a wide range of actors involved in GR4A value chains, they will be uniquely positioned to provide timely feedback to U.S. aid programs, philanthropic foundations, African policymakers, NGOs, and civil society organizations as these actors jointly tackle the challenges of rural poverty and hunger reduction.

Research findings will be available to the public and the academic community on the University of Minnesota Data Repository and will be disseminated through academic and popular writing and conferences. U.S. and African graduate and undergraduate students will actively participate in the research.

The results of this comparative project will be integrated into courses and into broader educational initiatives at the Universities of Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, as well as at Macalester College

Macalester College, founded in 1874, is a national liberal arts college with a full-time enrollment of 2,045 students. Macalester is nationally recognized for its long-standing commitment to academic excellence, internationalism, multiculturalism, and civic engagement. Learn more at macalester.edu (http://www.macalester.edu/).

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