



PAEPARD



THEMATIC BRIEF #1



Strengthening the capacity of multi-stakeholder partnerships in ARD



ARD Partnerships - An Introduction

Authors: Richard Hawkins, Julia Ekong and Mundie Salm



Agricultural Research for Development

As its name implies, **Agricultural Research for Development (ARD)**¹, is research that is intended to lead to significant and beneficial changes to rural livelihoods, the agricultural sector, and to national economies. Public and private agencies financing research are increasingly demanding evidence of impact at these levels to justify their investment: research that results in unapplied knowledge, or the development of new technology which is not used - for whatever reasons - is a poor investment. In practice, this means that the complex array of factors that affect the uptake of technology needs to be addressed in an integrated way, rather than considered as “external” to the research. Such factors can include the availability of inputs, advisory services, finance, access to markets, favourable regulations and policies, and so forth.

To achieve these development impacts, changes in technology alone are rarely sufficient. Changes in the organization of the various actors involved, and at the institutional level (i.e., the “enabling environment”, the “rules of the game” – regulations, policies, incentives) are usually also needed, if the new technology is to be used in practice, or have the beneficial impacts intended. This broader process is referred to as “innovation”, in these briefs, and implies change in practice, often integrating organizational and institutional change, by farmers and other actors in agriculture agri-food chains or systems – rather than simply an unapplied new idea or “invention” which has yet to lead to such a change. This broader array of interacting elements is often referred to as the “innovation system”². Taking a more comprehensive “innovation systems approach” is therefore often contrasted with a more traditional “technology transfer approach”, which assumes that improved production technology, as generated by traditional agricultural researchers, and transferred to farmers by extension agents, will automatically lead to the adoption of the technology and widespread change in practice.

An actor or stakeholder can never have a *complete* understanding of all the factors influencing an innovation system, and no actor involved has the

capacity or mandate to act on all aspects needed to improve the system. The different actors involved - that make up the innovation system - often have a different view or opinion concerning what needs to be changed, and how. While they may agree on a common goal, greater national production of barley to substitute inputs for brewing, for example, they may have their own specific interests and profit margins to defend. Ideally, ARD partnerships result in a process of mutual learning, cultural understanding and changes of attitude - but these deeper transformation processes are not easy to achieve.

PAEPARD experience has shown that funding for balanced and multi-stakeholder ARD partnerships, where farmer organizations or the private sector have a significant and even determining voice in setting the research agenda, is not yet easy to obtain. Complex and elaborate research funding mechanisms tend to focus on more straightforward conventional research, with information and technology as shorter-term outputs, rather than on longer-term outcomes in farmer livelihoods and commercial value chains.

Multi-Stakeholder Innovation Platforms

Bringing different actors or stakeholders of an innovation system together to reconcile their different viewpoints, agree on common goals and integrate their actions to achieve these goals has led to a common new form of organizational innovation - the “Multi-Stakeholder Innovation Platform” (MSIP).

A MSIP is essentially a forum for interaction between interest groups (to work out common goals) and actors (who need to act to achieve these goals)³. Its organization and governance can be relatively informal and temporary (with members simply agreeing to meet periodically), or more formal and permanent (with written governance structures, legal status, etc.). It can be relatively local and focussed (e.g. on the production of a particular commodity in a particular district), or broader in scope (e.g. incorporating national-level actors, focussing on a



When farmers and researchers meet in the field to combat aflatoxin contamination in groundnuts, Malawi.

national commodity and/or more on policy issues). Often set up as a means of implementing a particular time-limited, project, MSIPs can be “institutionalized” as (semi) permanent committees, taskforces, associations, etc.

There is no “best” way to organize a MSIP. Its organization and management will depend on objectives, timescale, interests and capacities of those involved, resources available, etc. Not every individual with an interest can participate directly: the different interest groups involved (farmers, traders, processors, policy makers, researchers, service providers, etc.) need to be organized themselves, so that they can choose their respective and recognized representatives on the MSIP. As with most innovations, success depends on the learning and continual improvements by those involved. The “transaction costs” are often significant: most obvious is the time needed to meet and interact, to form and consolidate the partnership and develop joint action plans, and - above all - to build trust and establish effective communication. Smaller, time-bound initiatives can kick start multi-stakeholder interaction and researchers and farmers to come together, but it usually takes longer to bring in the private sector to address market opportunities and linkages.

Brokerage and facilitation

The formation and functioning of multi-stakeholder partnerships rarely happens spontaneously or smoothly. Brokerage, to bring the partners together, and facilitators, to build and maintain the relationship between the partners are necessary functions. The question is: who provides these functions?

In higher income countries with relatively more efficient innovation systems and highly competitive agricultural value chains, private sector brokers, and technical, financial and business support services play a key role in linking the different actors. In lower income countries, often struggling to transition from more subsistence-oriented agriculture to more market-based systems, efficient and effective bridging institutions are yet to evolve.

The PAEPARD platform took up the role as broker, with the project objective of bringing together African-European, and researcher-research user ARD partners.



Four PAEPARD partnerships in action

FACILITATING STAKEHOLDERS TO INTEGRATE ACTIONS

The Soya Farmers Federation of Benin (Sojagnon-Benin) was determined to improve the technical support given to village-level soybean processors improve the cooperation between researchers and processors. Linking up with Benin's University of Abomey-Calavi, Wageningen University and Research Center (WUR), University of Lisbon (ISA), the Federation of Unions of Farmers (FUPRO), Institut des Sciences Agronomiques du Benin (INRAB) and with funding from a variety of sources, this ARD partnership worked with women's processing groups to improve production of quality, long-lasting soybean milk, as well as soy "dadonu" (taste enhancer), and "soya goussi" (a highly nutritive product sold as a meat substitute). Twelve women's cooperatives have now been trained in soy processing, and other development projects are now interested to further scale up these products to improve local nutrition and incomes.

BRINGING FARMERS AND MARKETS TOGETHER

The Ugandan Christian University joined forces with Farmgain Africa, a private consulting firm, Chain Uganda, an NGO, and the Natural Research Institute (NRI) of the University of Greenwich, to initiate a project to collect and characterize indigenous vegetables in Uganda and enhance nutrition security and incomes through their use. The partners identified and promoted suitable species, developed improved methods of post-harvest handling, and trained farmers in production and handling practices. A market study was then undertaken with value chain actors involved to determine market volumes, and farmers then trained in marketing and business dynamics and linked to market actors, resulting in farmers selling their indigenous vegetables in Kampala and Entebbe.

INTEGRATING PRODUCTION AND POLICY ISSUES

After extensive consultations with national farmer organizations in Malawi and Zambia, the Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) identified aflatoxin contamination as a major constraint to the groundnut value chains, which are of local and export importance. Forming an ARD partnership with national and international research organizations, the consortium conducted research activities to verify farm level production and post-harvest practice that could influence aflatoxin levels. Of more importance however, were capacity building and awareness-raising campaigns to disseminate improved practices. A third key activity of the partnership was to promote an evidence-based policy dialogue at national and regional levels to establish and enforce product standards commensurate with international aflatoxin standards.

INTEGRATING THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The soil fungus *Trichoderma spp.* acts as a biofertilizer, enhancing the degradation of organic matter and releasing nutrients needed for plant growth. With seed funding from PAEPARD, a private company in France (BIOPHYTEC), a private company in Burkina Faso called BIOPROTECT and a NGO in Burkina Faso (ARFA) joined forces with researchers from INERA (in Burkina Faso) and IRD (in France) and producer organizations in Burkina Faso to identify and isolate strains available and exploit the commercial potential of *Trichoderma* to improve crop yields. Additional funds from the Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food of the economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) allowed local NGOs to train more farmers in organic production techniques. The activities of the partnership, including selection and development of better strains of *Trichoderma* in France, the development, testing and commercialization of enriched compost in Burkina Faso, resulted in the creation of new jobs, environmentally friendly production techniques, strengthening of farmer organizations, and improvements in crop yields and farmer incomes.

Key actions of the project included mobilizing European and African organizations to join partnerships around themes identified through a call procedure, with seed money then given to these partnerships to meet, further define joint objectives, organizational roles, and develop funding proposals. In this way, PAEPARD brokered partnerships between actors with common interests that would otherwise rarely interact with each other, to enable them to jointly identify and prioritize feasible and desirable research themes (see Box 1).

PAEPARD also anticipated that external and impartial "agricultural innovation facilitators", from outside the partnership organizations themselves, would improve interaction and communication between ARD partners in consortia formed. However, this intervention was only successful in a few cases. Their role was sometimes seen as duplicating that of whoever was leading the partnership - often senior researchers who took the lead in preparing proposals for research funding calls. Without dedicated remuneration, external facilitators were seen as poorly motivated - PAEPARD assumptions that facilitators could charge partners for this support service, developing it into a viable business as it is in some high-income countries, proved overly optimistic. In practice, and in lower-income countries, these roles are at least partially adopted by NGOs, and sometimes by research organizations or socially-minded private companies.

Capacities for innovation

Most important of all to the success of ARD partnerships are the capacities required by individuals and organizations involved in the MSIP or innovation system, and the resulting capacity of the innovation system itself.

When "capacity strengthening" is mentioned, it often implies training of individuals and - moreover - a focus on technical capacities of those individuals. Much formal education in schools, technical schools and universities and even continuing professional development focuses on this aspect of capacity strengthening. However, the

performance or capacity of a "system" is dependent on the interaction between its interconnected elements: otherwise "the whole does not add up to more than the sum of its parts". The capacities needed by the actors within a MSIP or innovation system to interact, collaborate, build trust and take joint action to achieve integrated change, have been referred to as "functional capacities", to distinguish them from the more "technical capacities" of how to grow crops, raise livestock, process products, etc.

A recent analysis of the capacities needed to innovate resulted in the identification of four key capacities needed for innovation systems (and hence ARD partnerships) to perform effectively:

- 1. The capacity to navigate complexity:** understanding the whole system, rather than taking a reductionist focus on individual parts; viewing change as an emergent property of the overall system that is not easily predicted from analysing individual elements.
- 2. The capacity to collaborate:** enabling ARD partners to communicate effectively, understand each other's perspectives, negotiate common goals and manage conflicts, manage partnerships.
- 3. The capacity to reflect and learn:** reflecting on experience, learning from that experience - challenging current assumptions and beliefs about "why" and "how" as well as "what", and improving processes and actions on the basis of that learning.
- 4. The capacity to engage in strategic and political processes:** questioning the status quo, understanding who has power to affect the enabling environment of the system and how these policies, regulations can be influenced.

These four capacities combine to strengthen the overall "capacity to adapt and respond in order to realize the potential of innovation", which shifts the focus from reactive problem solving to co-creation of a better future situation⁴.

 **Good facilitation brings the many stakeholders in an ARD partnership in tune with one another**



⁴ Common Framework on Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems: Conceptual Background. Published by the Tropical Agriculture Platform, Rome, 2016.

PAEPARD experience in capacity strengthening

PAEPARD itself was a project not only to broker ARD partnerships, but also to strengthen their capacity to function and undertake collaborative research to deliver expected development outcomes. The project did this by providing seed money for potential partners to come together and explore their common interests and develop joint research proposals. The project also developed a cadre of “Agricultural Innovation Facilitators” to facilitate these stakeholder interactions, although with mixed success (this issue is discussed further in Brief 3: Adaptive Leadership in ARD partnerships). Finally, the project provided opportunities for the partnerships to reflect on, and “capitalize” their learning.

This capitalization process showed that a continual yet flexible capacity strengthening strategy is needed to support multi-stakeholder ARD consortia, one that involves:

- An ongoing, interactive and iterative process of reflection and mutual learning, through facilitation and coaching (as opposed to one-off training events);
- External facilitation of effective reflection and learning, to capture lessons learned, and to document the change process;
- Learning new skills to analyse complex interactions within agri-food systems, promote collaboration between the different members of the MSIP and plan joint activities;
- Adaptation of reflection and learning to the specific organizational and institutional environment in which joint actions are taking place;
- Flexible interventions to promote learning on topics which evolve over time, due to the range of perspectives of the different stakeholders and changing focus or composition of the partnership.

PAEPARD eight thematic briefs

The thematic briefs in this series explore these capacities and capacity strengthening processes in more detail:

• BRIEF 2 - Systems thinking and ARD Partnerships

- looks at the broader systemic (or systems) thinking needed for addressing complex, multi-faceted issues. Tools consisting of diagrams and matrices that can be used to explore systems thinking are introduced.

• BRIEF 3 - Adaptive leadership of ARD Partnerships

- looks at how different types of leadership can promote and guide collaboration between stakeholders and project partners with different backgrounds, interests, knowledge, culture, and operating procedures.

• BRIEF 4 - Managing power differences in ARD Partnerships

- considers how the inevitable power issues between different actors and stakeholders with different resources and interests, can be made more explicit and managed in ARD partnerships.

• BRIEF 5 - Including women and youth in ARD Processes

- focuses on frameworks and tools which can be used to ensure that these groups are included in the definition of research needs and ARD processes, and hence for them to benefit from the resulting changes in practice.

• BRIEF 6 - Reflection and learning in ARD

- explores how to improve the continual joint learning required by ARD partners, based on iterative cycles of planning, action and reflection on the experience gained through collaboration.

• BRIEF 7 - Knowledge co-creation and management in ARD

- looks at the processes which are needed to convert the information gained through research projects into knowledge which leads to action, and eventually embedded in the processes, products and culture of organizations.

• BRIEF 8 - Scaling of ARD processes

- considers the principles and strategies that allow ARD processes and the learning gained through these processes to be used more widely.

References used and further information

- Adekunle, A.A., Ellis Jones, J., Ajibefun, I., Nyikal, R.A., Bangali, S., Fatunbi, O., and Ange, A. 2012. [Agricultural Innovation in Sub-Saharan Africa. Experience from Multiple-Stakeholder Approaches](#). FARA, Accra, Ghana.
- Adekunle, A.A., Fatunbi, O., Buruchara, R., and Nyamwaro, S. 2013. [Integrated Agricultural Research for Development: from Concept to Practice](#). FARA, Accra, Ghana.
- Anandajayasekeram, P., Puskur, R., and Zerfu, E. 2009. [Applying innovation system concept in agricultural research for development. A learning module](#). ILRI (International Livestock Research Institute), Nairobi, Kenya.
- FAO. 2014. [Innovation in family farming. The State of Food and Agriculture](#). Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Italy.
- Fatunbi A.O., Adekunle, A.A., Youdeowei, A., Odularu, G.O., Adisa, S.A., Ohiomoba, I., and Akinbamijo, A.A. 2015. [A Resource Manual for Training in Integrated Agricultural Research for Development \(IAR4D\) in Innovation Platforms](#). FARA, Accra, Ghana.
- Hawkins, R., Heemskerck, W., Booth, R., Daane, J., Maatman, A. and Adekunle, A.A. 2009. [Integrated Agricultural Research for Development \(IAR4D\)](#). A concept paper prepared for the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge FARA, Accra, Ghana.
- Hawkins, R., Ekong, J., Nampala, P. and Stepman, F. 2018. [Strengthening Capacity for Agricultural Research for Development: Collaboration for Results](#). PAEPARD.
- HLPE. 2018. [Multi-stakeholder partnerships to finance and improve food security and nutrition in the framework of the 2030 Agenda](#). A report by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome.
- Makini, F.W., Kamau, G.M., Makelo, M.N., Adekunle, A.A., Mburathi, G.K., Misiko, M., Pali, P. and Dixon, J. n.d. [Operational Field Guide for Developing and Managing Local Agricultural Innovation Platforms](#). KARI, Kenya and Australian Aid.
- Nederlof, S. and Pyburn, R. (Editors). 2012. [One finger cannot lift a rock: Facilitating innovation platforms to trigger institutional change in West Africa](#). Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam.
- Nederlof, S., Wongtschowski, M. and Van Der Lee, F. (Editors). 2011. [Putting heads together: Agricultural innovation platforms in practice](#). KIT, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
- Schut, M., Andersson, J.A., Dror, I., Kamanda, J., Sartas, M., Mur, R., Kassam, S., Brouwer, H., Stoian, D., Devaux, A., Velasco, C., Gramzow, A., Dubois, T., Flor, R.J., Gummert, M., Buizer, D., McDougall, C., Davis, K., Homann-Kee Tui, S. and Lundy, M. 2017. [Guidelines for Innovation Platforms in Agricultural Research for Development](#). IITA, Nigeria and Wageningen University, The Netherlands.
- Tropical Agriculture Platform. 2016. [Common Framework on Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems: Conceptual Background](#). CAB International, Wallingford, U.K.
- World Bank. 2012. [Agricultural Innovation Systems: An Investment Sourcebook](#). World Bank, Washington D.C. USA.





PAEPARD



Executive summary

Agricultural Research for Development

(ARD) is a research process that results in change in livelihoods and the agricultural sector, not just the generation of theoretical knowledge. To achieve such an impact, new technologies usually need to be integrated with organizational innovation, e.g. through innovation partnerships or multi-stakeholder innovation platforms, and at the institutional level, through relevant policies.

While multi-stakeholder ARD partnerships

are desirable, the difficulties involved in their formation and functioning should not be underestimated. Organizations with very different cultures, procedures and perspectives, such as research institutions, farmer groups, NGOs and private agribusiness companies, do not often come together

naturally, even if they share a common interest. Establishing effective communication, mutual learning and trust takes considerable time and effort. External agencies can effectively provide brokerage and facilitation roles in ARD partnership development, but the need for funding such roles is rarely available.

Strengthening the capacity of ARD partnerships

to deliver innovation requires developing “functional capacities” of partners: capacities to navigate complex systems, to collaborate, to reflect and learn, and to advocate for institutional change. A number of examples of PAEPARD partnerships are given in this brief. In addition, the various skills implied in these functional capacities are introduced here and described further in subsequent Thematic Briefs.

Disclaimer: This project has been funded with the support of the European Commission’s Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG-DevCo). This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the European Union cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

paepard@dgroups.org

www.paepard.org

 twitter.com/PAEPARD

 facebook.com/PAEPARD

paepard.blogspot.fr

PUBLISHER: FARA · GRAPHIC DESIGN: D. BONNET · ILLUSTRATIONS: OLIVIER RUCHE · PHOTO CREDIT: R. KAHANE · PAEPARD · 10/2018
ISSN: 2550-3499