



In several countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, diverse organisations have joined forces to promote local innovation processes in agriculture and natural resource management (NRM). After analysing their own experiences in agricultural research and development (ARD), they have drawn up their individual PROLINNOVA Country/Regional Programmes (CPs/RPs) as well as joint international activities for mutual learning and policy dialogue. This Global Partnership Programme (GPP) is a Community of Practice that is built from the bottom up, in the spirit of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR).

PROLINNOVA is an NGO-initiated programme to build a global learning network to promote local innovation processes in ecologically-oriented agriculture and NRM. The focus is on recognising the **dynamics** of indigenous knowledge (IK) and enhancing capacities of farmers (including forest dwellers, pastoralists and fisherfolk) to adjust to change – to develop their own site-appropriate systems and institutions of resource management so as to gain food security, sustain their livelihoods and safeguard the environment. The essence of sustainability lies in the capacity to adapt.

The programme builds on and scales up farmer-led approaches to participatory development that start with finding out how farmers work out new and better ways of using and managing natural resources. Understanding the rationale behind local innovation transforms how research and extension agents view local people. This experience stimulates interest on both sides to enter into joint action. Local ideas are further developed in a process that integrates IK and scientific knowledge. Joint action and analysis lead to joint learning and further action.

How it all started

PROLINNOVA was conceived in late 1999, when Southern and Northern NGOs – supported by GFAR, the NGO Committee (NGOC) of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs – met in Rambouillet, France, to see how participatory approaches to ARD based on local initiatives could be scaled up. Participants asked ETC EcoCulture, a Netherlands-based NGO, to help launch a GPP built up from country level. NGOs in Africa and Asia facilitated multi-stakeholder design of Country Programmes (CPs), which then designed international activities to reinforce their own. The PROLINNOVA partners are developing country-specific ways to:

- document local innovations and experiments by resource-poor farmers and communities;
- strengthen partnerships between farmers, development agents, research scientists and other actors to refine local innovations and to encourage others to try them out;
- create wider awareness of and skills in participatory innovation development (PID) through a variety of learning mechanisms;

- develop and expand mechanisms that give farmers more influence over formal research, extension and education; and
- integrate local innovation and PID approaches into formal agricultural research, development and education institutions.

PROLINNOVA seeks to:

- *demonstrate the effectiveness of farmer-led participatory innovation for sustainable development*
- *build farmer-extension-researcher partnerships*
- *enhance capacities of farmers, researchers and extension agents in participatory approaches*
- *pilot decentralised funding and other mechanisms to promote local innovation*
- *engage in national and regional policy dialogue to stimulate and enhance local innovation*
- *set up platforms for reflection, analysis and learning about promoting local innovation*
- *integrate participatory approaches to farmer-led innovation and experimentation into research, extension and education institutions*

Participatory design of the GPP

In 2003, key stakeholder organisations in ARD in Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda – supported by IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) – collected in-country experiences in recognising local innovation and promoting PID. They held workshops to analyse their experiences and developed plans to scale up these approaches. Since 2004, DGIS (Netherlands Directorate General for International Cooperation) partly funds these CPs to realise their plans and supports similar processes in Cambodia, Nepal, Niger, South Africa, Sudan and Tanzania.

In 2006, a francophone programme PROFEIS was launched to expand activities in the West African Sahel to include Senegal, Mali and Burkina Faso. An Andes programme was launched in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. In 2007, CPs in Mozambique and Kenya joined the network and, in early 2009, in Nigeria. A similar initiative has started in the Pacific Islands.

CP activities differ depending on their experience and self-identified strengths and weaknesses in recognising the dynamics of IK, engaging in PID and scaling it up. However, common elements include:

- developing inventories and databases of local innovations, innovators and organisations working together with them
- bringing farmers, extensionists and scientists together to plan and implement joint experiments, starting from jointly prioritised local innovations
- creating national and subnational multi-stakeholder platforms to share information about local innovation and to learn jointly about PID and its institutionalisation
- building capacity to identify and document local innovation and engage in PID, through training workshops for farmers and scientists
- participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) of joint activities, outcomes and impacts
- creating awareness (through innovator fairs, publications, mass media etc) and engaging in policy dialogue with decision-makers in agricultural research, extension and education to create enabling conditions and policies for PID.

At annual meetings since 2004, the country-level partners define the international networking, learning and other support mechanisms needed to reinforce their work. Participatory planning at international level thus mirrors the approach at national and grassroots level: the partners develop and own a programme based on their self-defined needs and interests.

Structure of the decentralised programme

In each country or region, a local NGO convenes the major ARD stakeholders. It serves as secretariat for a **National Steering Committee (NSC)** made up of people from government research, extension and education, other NGOs and farmer groups. The NSC defines the CP/RP activities, ranging from farmer-led research to policy dialogue; gives strategic guidance; helps mobilise resources; and is the apex structure for accountability. A smaller core team is responsible for coordinating implementation of CP/RP activities.

The **International Support Team (IST)** supports the country and regional activities through programme coordination, capacity strengthening, coaching, web-based knowledge management, policy dialogue, networking and publishing. The IST comprises IIRR in the Philippines, ETC EcoCulture and CIS in the Netherlands, and the coordinators of the FAIR (Farmer Access to Innovation Resources), PROFEIS and HAPID (HIV/AIDS and PID) subprogrammes.

The **PROLINNOVA Oversight Group (POG)** serves as governance mechanism to ensure accountability of the GPP to the CPs, their constituencies and donors. The POG is made up of four people from CPs, one from the IST and three independent persons, elected by the CPs and the IST to serve two-year terms. The POG meets face-to-face at least once a year and communicates otherwise by email and Skype. It has drawn up several policies and guidelines for the GPP, which can be found on the PROLINNOVA website.

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Participatory learning and mentoring

In March 2004, CP partners first met in Ethiopia for an international workshop hosted by PROLINNOVA–Ethiopia, coordinated by AgriService Ethiopia (ASE). Local farmers explained how their innovations help them achieve food security. Government and NGO participants from each CP shared experiences in farmer–extension–research–education partnerships in innovation and planned international activities.

In June 2005, the CP coordinators met in Uganda to learn more about enhancing multi-stakeholder partnerships and to harmonise their PM&E activities. The NGO that coordinates PROLINNOVA–Uganda, Environmental Alert, hosted the meeting. It was held prior to the Forum on Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) General Assembly, so PROLINNOVA partners could also attend the pre-pleenary meeting to set up an NGO ARD consortium in sub-Saharan Africa.

The March 2006 international meeting was hosted by PROLINNOVA–Cambodia, coordinated by CEDAC. Participants updated each other on progress and discussed information-sharing strategies, piloting Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs), process documentation and resource mobilisation.

The international meeting in March 2007 in Senegal was hosted by PROFEIS / IED–Afrique, and in April 2008 by PROLINNOVA–Ghana. This meeting in Tamale was preceded by a “writeshop” on piloting LISFs. The May 2009 meeting was hosted by LI-BIRD in Nepal. The March 2010 meeting will be in The Netherlands.

Capacity-building is central to PROLINNOVA. IIRR offered international training of PID facilitators in the Philippines (2004), in Uganda (2006) and in Ethiopia (2007). The participants then trained research and extension staff in their own countries. A refresher training event was held in Kenya in August 2009.

In mid 2006, PELUM (Participatory Ecological Land Use Management)–Tanzania provided international training on policy dialogue. A mini-workshop for mutual learning on this was held at the 2007 meeting in Senegal, and further training in policy dialogue in September 2009 in The Netherlands, with RUAF.

A writeshop on gender issues in PID, based on the principle of learning through joint documentation by CP partners, was held in November 2008 in Uganda.

South–South mentoring and cross-visits between the CPs/RPs enhance mutual learning and strengthen capacities to build partnerships in ARD.

Multi-country thematic initiatives

CPs with common interests in specific themes have joined forces in their own initiatives:

- **Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs).** FAIR won a two-year grant from the French-funded DURAS (Promoting Sustainable Development in Agricultural Research Systems) for action research on LISFs in Cambodia, Ethiopia, South Africa and Uganda. The Nepal CP joined with own resources. Using locally-managed funds, farmers finance their own research and learning activities in agricultural innovation. The first phase was coordinated by PROLINNOVA-SA. Rockefeller Foundation is supporting continuation and scaling-up of LISF piloting for three years, including also the CPs in Kenya, Ghana and Tanzania.
- **Farmer-led documentation (FLD).** *Insight* and COMPAS (Comparing & Supporting Endogenous Development) piloted participatory video in Ghana, where local innovators made films to share with other farmers and influence policy. In 2006, PROLINNOVA, PELUM-Uganda and Novib held an international FLD workshop in Uganda. Pilot activities are underway in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Niger and South Africa.
- **HIV/AIDS and PID (HAPID).** In 2008, a 2-year study, coordinated by PROLINNOVA-SA, started in Ghana, Mozambique and South Africa to explore implications of HIV/AIDS for PID and possibilities of using PID in working with communities confronting HIV/AIDS.
- **PID and climate change.** In 2008–09, partners in Ethiopia, Nepal and Niger made studies to explore how farmers, including pastoralists, are innovating to adapt to climate change.
- **Curriculum development (CD).** To reinforce current activities in several CPs to integrate PID approaches into agricultural education and training curricula, these CPs have been exchanging course designs and materials, most recently at a workshop in Uganda in March 2009, and have drawn up a joint plan for CD activities. CIS Amsterdam coordinates this initiative.

Policy dialogue

Often with GFAR support, PROLINNOVA takes part in various international ARD fora. At the 2003 GFAR meeting in Kenya, ASE told how the CP was set up in Ethiopia. At GFAR 2004 in Mexico, Environmental Alert presented PROLINNOVA-Uganda. At the 2005 European Forum on ARD in Switzerland, LI-BIRD and Farmer Support Group presented their partnership experience in Nepal and South Africa. At GFAR 2005 in Morocco, POG Chair Betty Del Rosario and in 2006 in the USA Laurens van Veldhuizen (IST) reported on PROLINNOVA progress. CEDAC presented Asian PROLINNOVA experiences to APAARI (Asia Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions) in late 2006, and LI-BIRD to APAARI in late 2007.

In June 2007, PROLINNOVA-SA presented the GPP at FARA's Fourth General Assembly in South Africa, at an event organised by UK-funded Research Into Use (RIU) on "Overcoming Challenges in Scaling Out Agricultural Research Successes". RIU funded small-scale farmers to prepare posters, brochures and video documenting local innovation, to showcase their work at the Africa Agricultural Science Week, and to attend the FARA event.

Wider sharing and learning

Working with **existing electronic networks and databases** serving like-minded groups, PROLINNOVA shares concepts and experiences in participatory innovation. To bridge the digital divide, printed matter is also disseminated and linkages sought with other media, e.g. radio. Information about PROLINNOVA activities is spread through inputs to magazines (e.g. *Appropriate Technology*, *LEISA Magazine*, *Rural Development News*) and electronic newsletters.

The **PROLINNOVA website** (www.prolinnova.net) is the main tool for wider sharing. The CPs asked IIRR to manage the website, so they can focus on action on the ground, but increasingly take their own initiative in filling the CP webpages. The PROLINNOVA e-group serves as an open platform to discuss ARD that builds on and enhances local innovation processes.

PROLINNOVA collaborated with IIRR-Africa and the international research centres CIAT-Africa, IFPRI and ILRI to hold the **Innovation Africa Symposium** in 2006 in Uganda (www.innovationafrica.net), funded by Rockefeller and Ford Foundations and World Bank. With CIAT-Asia and ICIMOD, it co-organised the **Innovation Asia-Pacific Symposium** in May 2009 in Nepal (www.innovation-asia-pacific.net).

Several PROLINNOVA partners joined the **Farmer First Revisited** conference held in December 2007 at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in the UK (www.farmer-first.org). Their contributions appear in the book with this title published in early 2009.

PROLINNOVA is partner in a new European Union supported research project on "**Joint Learning in Innovation Systems in African Agriculture**" (**JOLISAA**), coordinated by CIRAD (France).

Sources of programme support

After inception funding from IFAD, DGIS is the main donor. GFAR, CTA (Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation), French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rockefeller Foundation, Misereor, ActionAid, EED (Church Development Service), the World Bank and RIU support specific activities, projects or CPs.

Interest of international and national agencies in PROLINNOVA is growing, as reflected in more and more requests for information and collaboration, and in increasing donor support. Both the international secretariat and individual CPs mobilise funding. The partners in the IST and CPs cover over one third of total costs themselves. Funds continue to be sought for new national platforms and thematic initiatives.

Some PROLINNOVA publications and papers

- *Developing technology with farmers: a trainer's guide for participatory learning.* ZED Books, London, 1997 / reprint IIRR, Silang, 2004 (also in Spanish & Arabic)
- Grassroots Innovation. *ILEIA Newsletter* 16 (2), 2000.
- *Farmer innovation in Africa: a source of inspiration for agricultural development.* Earthscan, London, 2001.
- *PTD for agricultural improvement: challenges for institutional integration.* IIRR, 2002.
- *Advancing PTD: case studies on integration into agricultural research, extension and education.* IIRR, 2003.

- *IK Notes* (World Bank 2004–06):
 70. Ethiopia: a woman innovator speaks
 71. Participatory video: rural people document their knowledge and innovations
 72. Regional radio in Tunisia
 74. Building multi-stakeholder partnerships to promote farmer experimentation and innovation in Ghana
 76. Promoting local innovation: enhancing IK dynamics and links with scientific knowledge
 77. Burkina Faso: indigenous innovation in farmer-to-farmer extension
 78. South Africa: a smallholders' innovative approach to producing and exporting fruit
 85. Innovation Support Funds for farmer-led research
 96. Ethiopia: Endogenous and modern innovations: differing perspectives
 - Participatory approaches to ARD / Farmer innovation as entry point to participatory research and extension / PTD where there is no researcher / Developing partnerships to promote local innovation. In: *Sourcebook on participatory research and development for sustainable agriculture and natural resource management*. CIP-UPWARD, 2005.
 - Social dimensions in ARD: how civil society fosters partnerships to promote local innovation by rural communities. Keynote, EFARD, Zurich, 2005.
 - *Facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships*. IIRR, 2006
 - *PTD/PID Circular* (since 1994)
 - No. 13: Top Twenty publications on PID, 2004
 - No. 14: Annotated list of journals, 2005
 - No. 15: Electronic databases and websites, 2006
 - No. 16: Local innovation and participatory R&D, 2007
 - *Recognising local innovation*. IIRR, 2008 (rev. ed.).
 - *Innovation Africa: enriching farmers' livelihoods*. Earthscan, London, 2008.
 - Building partnerships to promote local innovation processes. In: *Farmer First Revisited: innovation for agricultural research and development*, Practical Action Publishers, London, 2009
 - *Innovation Asia-Pacific* (in preparation)
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