

## ...FAIR Reflections... Experiences from Prolinnova's Local Innovation Support Fund Pilot

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“an innovation support instrument may decide to support not only innovations or innovators per se, but also the promotion of a culture of innovation and learning in local communities with a view to the empowerment of resource-poor people and their communities.”

(Friis-Hansen & Egelyng, 2007)

## What is FAIR?



## What is FAIR?

- It is about establishing **Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs)** – farmer led
- It makes experimentation and learning **funds accessible to resource poor farmers** to support local innovation that emanate from the creative thinking & practices of farmers
- It seeks to establish **sustainable mechanisms** at local level and that of the “support project”



## Period of piloting

- In 2005, a **two-year** grant from DURAS for Cambodia, Ethiopia, South Africa & Uganda
- LI-BIRD in **Nepal** started own pilot in 2004
- Further funding from Rockefeller Foundation in 2008
- Adding three **new pilots** in Ghana, Kenya & Tanzania to 2010



## Features

- Locally designed pilots, building-up to higher level structures
- Building on local processes and CBOs/ groups
- Multi-partner based
- Funds incentivise and support farmer focus on innovation
- Spurring demand-driven R&D action



## Main LISF features in 8 countries

Country	Application logic	Structuring mechanisms	Type of research funding	Scale
Cambodia	Farmer with their Farmer Association apply	Builds on existing groups with saving & lending activities	Loan & interest; if experiment failed, interest free loan	Six districts
Ethiopia	Farmer applies to NGO/ CBO	From NGO to group/ individual	Grant; 20% equity contribution	3 Districts/ Waredas
Ghana	Farmer applies to NGO/ CBO	From NGO to group/ individual	Grant; 20% equity contribution	4 Districts
Kenya	Farmer applies to CBO & onto Local Steering Cmte	From Zone to CBO to farmer	Grant; 20% equity contribution	2 Districts
Nepal	Farmer applies to Local LISF Cmte, unless big/ complex	Contract, deposit in account or cash in stages from NGO	Grant	National moving to local
South Africa	Farmer applies to multi-party panel, part of a Trust	Contract with farmer by Trust	Grant	1 District
Tanzania	Farmer applies to farmer cmte.	Zonal Facilitation Team receives applications	Grant	4 Districts
Uganda	Farmer applies to farmer cmte. set up by CBO	Contract with farmer, CBO bank account	Part loan, part grant, variable across sites	4 districts



## Award analysis

Country	Applications	Approved	female (individ. apps)	Range of size of award (US\$)	Observations: Individuals vs Groups
Cambodia	81	57	30%	9 – 105	Individual applications filtered by group
Ethiopia North	10	10	20%	75 – 285	Individuals
Ethiopia South	11	10	25%	220 - 310	All groups of 4-5 people
Nepal*	39	21	0%	48 - 730	Mostly individual
South Africa	53	7	20%	728 - 2,334	Mixed/ unisex groups & individuals
Uganda	80	55	47%	23.5 – 117.60	Three group applications only
TOTAL	274	160	28.4%		

\* Nepal's pilot has run for a longer period

## Typical selection criteria

- Local idea (social, economic, agricultural)
- Experimentation
- Willing to share results
- Of wider community benefit
- Some co-contribution (cash or kind)



## Lessons in setting up LISFs

- LISF management needs to be **decentralised** to the maximum extent possible
- Work with **existing CBO/groups**, experienced in participatory R&D; good local NGO needed to support this (= conducive environment).
- Complementary activities** needed to help create an enabling environment when above does not exist

## Lessons in set-up of LISFs (ctd)

- Principle of (partial) **payback** of funds by farmers important
- Level of payback depends** a/o on what the grant money was used for
- In most cases **many costs** of LISF experiments are hidden (carried by other sources, projects). These need to be made explicit

## Slide 9

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**AK1** Have wanted to add a coluimn here for the avg. award size. I am not sure if we have this information?  
Perhaps it is in the paper?  
Anton Krone, 4/2/2008

## Lessons on implementation

- LISF approach is new, relatively complex to grasp and implement **at all levels**
- It **needs time** and discussion to understand LISF purposes at all levels, to try out, to improve, etc.
- **Partner selection** is very important. Most pilots are experiencing uneven participation from research / extension partners



## Lessons on implementation (ctd)

- **Effective** application, screening and fund disbursement **mechanisms** developed
- In 4 out of 160 grants, diversion in use of funds
- Continue focus on **farmer or joint experimentation**
- **Improve M&E** and documentation:
  - More attention to impact on livelihood security
  - Capturing of experiments' data and findings
  - Methods include grantee written reports, oral presentations to meetings, audiovisuals
  - Focus Group Discussions for “the voice of the farmer”



## Sustainability at local level

- There are **good initial pointers on LISF sustainability at local level**, e.g. from Cambodia/ Uganda
- **Repayments** have started; supported by previous group-based savings and credit practices
- Other country pilots are pursuing similar options



## Sustainability at higher levels

- Strategies for **sustainability** and institutional arrangements **for facilitating spread of community-based LISF (the “project”)**, **have yet to be developed**
- Government research and extension and their **funds have to be leveraged for this**: Need to involve them from the start



## Conclusions

- First pilots show **very promising dynamics** when farmer groups/CBO start managing LISFs
- Most grants at this initial stage are **small**, mostly for supporting farmer own experimentation
- With increased experience of CBO-LISFs **larger grants for joint experimentation** may start
- Need for **M&E of impact** in due course
- **Sustainability of the LISF “support project”** needs attention in next phase

