

Proceedings of Meeting of Stakeholders in Agricultural Research and Development to establish PROLINNOVA in Nigeria



Held at Budget 5 Hotel Barnawa Kaduna

on 20 August 2008

Organised by Development Resource Initiative (DRIVE), Space 2000
Complex Barnawa Kaduna

Supported by PROLINNOVA International, ETC Foundation Netherlands

Background

1. One of the factors militating against improved performance of the agriculture sector in Nigeria is weak linkage among farmers, researchers and extension personnel. Over the years, the country has been following the traditional or linear approach to innovation systems in agriculture, which is based on the generation of technical know-how by researchers and dissemination of same to farmers through the extension network. The role of farmers in this approach is limited to receiving extension messages with little or no strategic interaction between farmers, researchers and extension agents.
2. The model also lacks mechanisms by which farmers can influence the process of problem identification and technology generation. Emphasis has been on enhancing research uptake by farmers rather than on a critical review of the process leading to technology generation. In some cases, the challenges faced by farmers have nothing to do with production but with the socio-economic constraints in the environment in which they operate. The apparent disconnect between researchers who generate technology and farmers who are expected to use them has resulted in a supply-driven mode of research.
3. Local innovations have received little or no attention by the national agricultural research systems (NARS). This may be due to the misconception that farmers are primarily the recipients of research outcomes and do not have anything to contribute to the development of agricultural knowledge system. However, experiences from different parts of the country have shown that local innovations are a vital component of NARS. Local innovation is an avenue for researchers to interact with farmers and build on local knowledge systems.
4. An international programme named PROLINNOVA was started by NGOs to promote local innovation and participatory innovation development processes. PROLINNOVA is currently being implemented in several countries including Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nepal, Niger, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. In each country, an NGO convenes the major stakeholders in agricultural research and development to design and implement a “country programme”. It is against this backdrop that Development Resource Initiative (DRIVE) and other stakeholders in agricultural research and development in Nigeria developed a proposal for an inception phase of PROLINNOVA in the country. With support from the International Support Team of PROLINNOVA, DRIVE organized a meeting of stakeholders in agricultural research and development to discuss the modalities for the establishment of PROLINNOVA in Nigeria. The report of the meeting is presented below.

Opening session

5. Stakeholders in agricultural research and development met on 20 August 2008 at Budget 5 Hotel Barnawa Kaduna to establish PROLINNOVA in Nigeria. The meeting started at 10.00am with opening prayers by representatives of the two major religious groups among the participants and welcome address by the Programme Coordinator of the host organization, Development Resource Initiative (DRIVE).
6. The opening speech was given by the representative of the Programme Manager of Kaduna State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), Mr M.B. Tukura. He welcomed the participants to the meeting and emphasized the need for low external inputs in agriculture in view of rising cost of fertilizers and other materials that farmers use. He reiterated that marketing was more of a problem to farmers in the State than production. In addition, he stressed that the ADP is willing to support any programme that would make life easier for the farmers in the State. Thereafter, Mr Yemi Adeleye, the programme coordinator of DRIVE, stated the objectives of the workshop as follows:

Objectives of Workshop

- *To raise awareness of PROLINNOVA among stakeholders in agricultural research and development in Nigeria;*
- *To discuss and agree on the management structure for PROLINNOVA programme in Nigeria;*
- *To develop a programme for PROLINNOVA in Nigeria*

Introduction of participants

7. Dr Karbo, the lead facilitator of the workshop from PROLINNOVA–Ghana, introduced himself to the participants and urged them to introduce themselves by mentioning their names and their organizations. A stakeholder analysis was conducted to gain a better understanding of the organizations and their missions. In this regard, participants wrote on cards the names of their organizations, their activities and the people they work with.
8. The analysis showed that, of the 26 participants at the workshop, 4 came from NGOs, 4 from farmers' groups, 4 from national research institutes, 5 from the national extension system, 6 from colleges of agriculture, 2 from the agricultural inputs supplier group and 1 from the international development group. There were 6 female and 20 male participants. Activities undertaken by the organizations included crop research, extension services / technology transfer, training, teaching, community

development, mobilization of women farmers, enterprise development and consultancy services. These activities showed that there is scope for the stakeholder groups to work together, since there is a lot of overlap in what they do. The people the organizations work with are as follows: women and men farmers (crops, livestock and fisheries), NGOs, financial institutions, ADPs, students and development partners. Most of the participants came as representatives of their organizations.

Expectations and fears

9. Participants wrote their fears and expectations concerning the workshop on cards which were synthesized as follows:

<i>Expectations</i>	<i>Fears</i>
<i>To know what PROLINNOVA is all about</i>	<i>Other stakeholders are not adequately represented</i>
<i>Most Nigerian farmers will benefit from PROLINNOVA</i>	<i>Nothing may happen after the meeting</i>
<i>An articulated, practicable and acceptable programme for PROLINNOVA–Nigeria will emerge</i>	<i>Financial implication of coordinating PROLINNOVA activities in Nigeria</i>
<i>Livelihoods of peasant farmers will be improved</i>	<i>Sustainability and continuity of the programme in Nigeria is an issue</i>
<i>Awareness of PROLINNOVA among stakeholders not present at the workshop will be created</i>	<i>The programme may not achieve its desired goals and objectives if it is not well focussed</i>
<i>PROLINNOVA will enhance the discovery of indigenous knowledge among local beekeepers</i>	<i>Meeting may be too long</i>
<i>PROLINNOVA will bring about a change from production to market oriented approach</i>	<i>Lack of political will may hinder the programme</i>
<i>PROLINNOVA will follow up on what other donor agencies have done on beekeeping</i>	<i>Women farmers may not benefit from the programme.</i>
<i>PROLINNOVA will facilitate the establishment of collaboration among stakeholders for the benefit of farmers</i>	
<i>Workable ideas will emanate from the meeting</i>	
<i>The meeting will lead to the emergence of a group that is committed to positive change in agriculture</i>	

Technical sessions

10. Participants were encouraged to look through the resource materials given to them on PROLINNOVA and answer various questions on PROLINNOVA. Based on this, they came up with the meaning of PROLINNOVA, the role of the PROLINNOVA Oversight Group, functions of the National Steering Committee, role of the working group and the countries where PROLINNOVA is being implemented. This was followed by a detailed PowerPoint presentation on experiences from PROLINNOVA–Ghana by the lead facilitator. The highlights of the presentation are as follows:

Experiences from PROLINNOVA–Ghana

- *Historical perspective on PROLINNOVA*
- *Getting started for PROLINNOVA*
- *Looking for things to try*
- *Results, outcomes and lessons*
- *Local and international partnerships for joint learning and sharing*
- *Strengthening local collaboration in programme management*
- *True farmer-research-extension linkage*
- *Endogenous resources mobilization*
- *Transparency and accountability programme financial management*
- *Conclusion and suggestions*

Discussions on presentation

11. As a follow up to the presentation on PROLINNOVA–Ghana, participants discussed the relevance of PROLINNOVA to agriculture and natural resource management in Nigeria. Participants were of the opinion that PROLINNOVA is very relevant to the situation in the country. The reasons given for this position are stated below:

Justifications for PROLINNOVA in Nigeria

- *Farmers have ideas and practices that should be recognized and taken to the next level*
- *Partnership provides room for improvement*
- *Agricultural development becomes more effective when farmers take the driver's seat in the technology development process*
- *PROLINNOVA will enhance sharing of ideas among farmers, researchers and extension personnel thereby facilitating technology adoption*

- *PROLINNOVA will contribute to the reduction of poverty among peasant farmers*
- *PROLINNOVA will contribute to the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through poverty reduction*
- *It is the current trend of addressing development issues globally*
- *It will improve the capacity of farmers to innovate*
- *It will enhance ownership and uptake of innovations in agriculture*
- *It will compliment the efforts of national and international agencies in agriculture*
- *It has the capacity to transform agricultural development in Nigeria through increased support for local innovations*
- *If well coordinated and well implemented, PROLINNOVA will bring economic value to researchers that are lying fallow*

12. Following the discussions on the relevance of PROLINNOVA to the agricultural situation in Nigeria, participants identified challenges that must be overcome for PROLINNOVA programme to be implemented in the country.

Challenges for PROLINNOVA programme in Nigeria

- *Commitment and skills in Participatory Innovation Development approaches*
- *Integrity and transparency*
- *Funding and logistics*
- *Relevant platform and infrastructure for undertaking PROLINNOVA activities*
- *Identification of local innovators and innovations*
- *Inconsistent government policies*
- *Coordination of PROLINNOVA programme across the country*
- *Support from policy makers and political class*
- *Sustainability of PROLINNOVA programme in Nigeria*

13. Based on the opportunities and challenges identified at the workshop participants went into four groups to develop objectives for PROLINNOVA programme. The coordinating organization and selected members of the working group were mandated to work on the outputs of the group exercises and what they came up with is presented below:

Objectives of PROLINNOVA–Nigeria

- *To identify new and better methods developed by farmers for improved productivity and share with stakeholders in agricultural research and development*
- *To facilitate the establishment of commodity-based multi-stakeholder platforms for the testing, adoption and utilization of new ideas or technologies from farmers and other innovators*
- *To support the capacity building of PROLINNOVA–Nigeria working group in Participatory Innovation Development approaches*
- *To raise awareness of PROLINNOVA among policymaking institutions in the agricultural research and development sector*
- *To document lessons learned from implementation of PROLINNOVA in Nigeria and share with a wider audience.*

14. The objectives of PROLINNOVA–Nigeria were derived from justifications and challenges identified by participants at the workshop.

<i>Objective of PROLINNOVA–Nigeria</i>	<i>Justifications/Challenges identified by participants</i>
<i>To identify new ideas or technologies developed by farmers for improved productivity and share with stakeholders in agricultural research and development</i>	<i>It has the capacity to transform agricultural development in Nigeria through increased support for local innovations</i>
	<i>Farmers have ideas and practices that should be recognized and taken to the next level</i>
	<i>PROLINNOVA will enhance sharing of ideas among farmers, researchers and extension personnel thereby facilitating technology adoption</i>
<i>To facilitate the establishment of commodity-based multi-stakeholder platforms for the testing, adoption and utilization of new ideas or technologies from farmers and other innovators</i>	<i>It will improve the capacity of farmers to innovate</i>
	<i>It will enhance ownership and uptake of innovations in agriculture</i>
	<i>If well coordinated and well implemented, PROLINNOVA will bring economic value to researchers that are lying fallow</i>

	<i>It will compliment the efforts of national and international agencies in agriculture</i>
	<i>PROLINNOVA will contribute to the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through poverty reduction</i>
	<i>It is the current trend of addressing development issues globally</i>
	<i>Relevant platform and infrastructure for undertaking PROLINNOVA activities</i>
<i>To support the capacity building of PROLINNOVA– Nigeria working group in Participatory Innovation Development approaches</i>	<i>Identification of local innovators and innovations</i>
	<i>Commitment and skills in Participatory Innovation Development approaches</i>
<i>To raise awareness of PROLINNOVA among policy making institutions in the agricultural research and development sector</i>	<i>Inconsistent government policies</i>
	<i>Support from policy makers and political class</i>
	<i>Sustainability of PROLINNOVA programme in Nigeria</i>
<i>To document lessons learned from implementation of PROLINNOVA in Nigeria and share with a wider audience</i>	<i>Support from policy makers and political class</i>
	<i>Coordination of PROLINNOVA programme across the country</i>

15. As a follow up to the presentation on the experiences of PROLINNOVA–Ghana with respect to management structure, participants brainstormed on the structure for PROLINNOVA programme in Nigeria. Eventually, it was agreed that membership of the National Steering Committee should be based on availability and proven commitment to PROLINNOVA activities in the country. Since participants were coming together for the first time on the issue of PROLINNOVA, it was affirmed they should be given more time to demonstrate their commitment to the programme before they can be considered for membership of the National Steering Committee.

16. In addition, participants felt that, since they were representing their organizations at the meeting, they would need more time to make consultations before they can take such responsibility. However, participants agreed generally to be members of the working group for PROLINNOVA in Nigeria as an indication of their interest and commitment to programme activities in the country. In this regard, membership of PROLINNOVA programme will be open to stakeholders in agricultural research and development that are interested and prepared to support

programme implementation in Nigeria. Finally the following resolutions concerning the way forward for PROLINNOVA in Nigeria were made by the participants:

Resolutions

The coordinating organization (Development Resource Initiative) will send the resolutions made at the workshop to organizations represented on or before 30 August 2008.

The coordinating organization will prepare proceedings of the workshop and send to organizations represented by the end of September 2008.

The coordinating organization will work with selected members of the working group to finalise the country programme by November 2008.

The coordinating organization will send the proceedings, finalized country programme and financial report to the international secretariat by November 2008.

The coordinating organization will keep all the members of PROLINNOVA–Nigeria working group abreast of development from time to time.

Workshop Evaluation

17. Participants evaluated the workshop with respect to presentation, participation, achievement of objectives, time management and quality of refreshment. The ratings were 'very good', 'good', 'average', 'poor' and 'very poor.' In terms of presentation 55% of the participants rated the workshop as 'very good' while 41% rated it as 'good'. Only 5% of the participants rated workshop presentation as 'average'.
18. As regards participation, 36% of the participants said the workshop was 'very good' followed by 50% of them who said it was 'good' while 9% of the participants said it was 'average'. Only 5% of the participants indicated that participation was 'poor'. About 48% of the participants said the workshop was 'very good' in terms of achievement of objectives while 38% said it was 'good' and 5% said it was 'average'. However, 10% of the participants observed that the workshop was 'poor' in terms of achievement of objectives. With respect to time management 35% said it was 'very good', followed by 45% who said it was 'good' and 10% who said it was 'average' and another 10% who indicated that it was 'poor'.

Lastly, 48% of the participants said the quality of refreshments was ‘*very good*’ while another 48% said it was ‘*good*’. Only 5% said it was ‘*poor*’.

19. Overall the workshop was rated ‘*very good*’ by 47% of the participants followed by another 47% who said it was ‘*good*’. However, 7% of them said it was ‘*average*’ while 5% said it was ‘*poor*’. The workshop came to a close at 5.00pm after the closing prayers and group photograph.

Workshop Evaluation

Evaluation Parameters	Ratings					Total
	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor	
Presentation	12	9	1	0	0	22
Participation	8	11	2	1	0	22
Objectives of workshop	10	8	1	2	0	21
Time Management	7	9	2	2	0	20
Refreshments	10	10	1	0	0	21
Total	47	47	7	5	0	106

Annex 1

PROLINNOVA–NIGERIA Meeting of Stakeholders in Agricultural Research and Development to establish PROLINNOVA in Nigeria (20 August 2008)

Programme of Activities

Time	Activity	Facilitator
9.30 – 9.35	Welcoming Prayers / Address	Yemi
9.35 – 9.40	Introduction of participants at the high table	Yemi
9.40 – 10.00	Opening speech by official of KADP	
10.0 – 10.10	Objectives of PROLINNOVA meeting & w/shop procedures	Yemi
10.10 – 10.40	Self-introduction of other participants and Stakeholder Identification and analysis	Kayode / Karbo
10.40 – 10.55	Expectations and Fears	Kayode
10.55 – 11.15	Tea – Break	
11.15 – 11.30	Overview of PROLINNOVA International	Yemi / Karbo
11.30 – 11.50	Experiences from PROLINNOVA–Ghana	Karbo
11.50 – 12.00	Discussions of presentations	Kayode
12.00 – 12.35	Relevance of PROLINNOVA in Nigeria	Yemi / Kayode
12.35 – 1.00	Identification of problems limiting PROLINNOVA practices in Nigeria. Suggest solutions and opportunities	Yemi / Kayode / Karbo
1.00 – 1.40	Lunch break	
1.40 – 2.00	Presentation and discussion of problems and opportunities for PROLINNOVA practices in Nigeria.	Karbo / Yemi
2.00 – 2.20	Formulation of programme objectives on critical issues for PROLINNOVA practices in Nigeria	Yemi / Kayode / Karbo
2.20 – 2.40	PROLINNOVA–Nigeria programme activity planning	Kayode / Karbo / Yemi
2.40 – 3.20	Roles and responsibilities, timeframe and inputs, action plan, outcomes & indicators	Kayode / Yemi / Karbo
3.10 – 3.50	Presentation and discussions on activity plans	Yemi / Kayode / Karbo
3.50 – 4.10	Break	
4.10 – 4.30	Criteria & selection of NSC	Yemi / Karbo
4.30 – 4.45	Way forward.	Yemi / Kayode
4.45 – 4.55	Evaluation / Closing	Kayode

Annex 2

Names and contact details of participants at the meeting of stakeholders in agricultural research and development to establish PROLINNOVA in Nigeria

S/No	Name	Organization	Contact information
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Annex 3
Nigeria PROLINNOVA Programme Development Inception
Workshop:
Sharing the Ghana Experiences

Naaminong Karbo

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Abstract

Promoting Local INNOVATION (PROLINNOVA) in Ecologically Oriented Agriculture and Natural Resource Management was initiated by a coalition of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in over ten countries. Irrespective of country programmes, one of the common objectives of the network is to build research and development partnerships through recognizing local innovation and engaging in joint farmer-led experimentation. In Ghana, PROLINNOVA partnership activities started in 2003 with a committed group of local NGOs, namely Ecumenical Association for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (ECASARD), the Ghana Organic Agriculture Network (GOAN) and the Association of Church Development Projects (ACDEP) working together with government departments/ institutions such as the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

For the six years of existence so far (2003–08), the Ghana programme made significant achievements including awareness creation on PROLINNOVA among current and potential partners, inventory and documentation of local innovations, planning and review workshops at zonal and national levels, training and participation in PROLINNOVA International Partners Meetings and Workshops including those in the Philippines, Ethiopia, Uganda, Senegal and Ghana. These are done building on the past experiences of the Northern Ghana LEISA¹ Working Group (NGLWG) in the use of participatory approaches in research and development for sustainable rural development.

This paper seeks to bring to the fore the Ghana experiences as one of the pioneer African country programmes, for sharing with other potential country programmes as PROLINNOVA continues to grow and scale up and out internationally across countries.

Introduction

¹ LEISA: Low-External-Input and Sustainable Agriculture

Promoting Local INNOVATION (PROLINNOVA) in Ecologically Oriented Agriculture and Natural Resource Management was initiated by a coalition of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in over ten countries. PROLINNOVA in general seeks to build on, strengthen and scale up and out participatory research and development (R&D) activities based on farmer-led experimentation and innovation. The continental spread of PROLINNOVA in Africa covers Ghana, Ethiopia, South Africa, Niger, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

In Ghana, PROLINNOVA partnership activities started in 2003 with a committed group of local NGOs namely Ecumenical Association for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (ECASARD), Ghana Organic Agriculture Network (GOAN) and Association of Church Development Projects (ACDEP) and government departments/ institutions such as the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) and Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

It is gladdening to have big brother Nigeria come into this international hall of fame. PROLINNOVA Ghana is particularly happy to be party to your programme development. In this, we see the significance of North–South and South–South partnerships which could have far-reaching meaning in our common sub-regional and continental endeavours, amply reflected in ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa’s Development). Indeed, by PROLINNOVA standards, this is a gesture of true promotion of local innovation in Africa.

This paper presentation therefore seeks to maximize the opportunity in this meeting by sharing PROLINNOVA–Ghana experiences immediately before the PROLINNOVA programme emerged, how Ghana got started, the search for things to try in PROLINNOVA, the results, outcomes and lessons learned to date. It is hoped that any ensuing cross-fertilization and future linkages could enrich and enhance both country programmes.

Historical perspective

Ghana’s agriculture is largely crop-livestock based with over 60–70 % of the population engaged in it for various types of livelihood. Knowledge generation and transfer systems for the sustainable management of natural resources have come under serious challenges in the past two or three decades, emanating from perceived delivery failures in the face of rising human populations and demand for food, and degradation and erosion of the natural resource base in terms of soil, water, and plant and animal genetic diversity, thus giving permanency to the prevailing rural poverty and disease. The initial question that development workers, researchers and policymakers asked at the time was: Why the high level of non-adoption of technologies generated from research institutions? There was the general feeling that there was something basically wrong with the generation and dissemination approach described as being top-down.

The advocacy for change since the late 1980s required reformulating the question thus: How can development workers, researchers, and other partners catalyze a farmer-led experimentation process for sustainable livelihood development? This actually marked the beginning of the turning point toward farmer-centred R&D activities in northern Ghana, which were realized through the LEISA/PTD² Collaborative Research project in partnership with ETC Foundation in the Netherlands.

It was in this period that the philosophy of farmer participation, 'farmer first' and 'farmer in the driving seat' and the 'plugging-in principle' got firmed up in the NGLWG institutional framework. An NGO (ACDEP) became the organizing nerve cell of the partners that looked for a strong stakeholder concerted action (Karbo *et al* 2007, Alebikiya & Karbo 1999) based on building mutual confidence, a common development objective, good rapport with local communities, harnessing official support for collaboration, trust, transparency and effective information flow and mutual respect. All these experiences by the year 2003 appeared to have created fertile ground for the PROLINNOVA–Ghana seed to germinate and to be nurtured to date.

Getting started for PROLINNOVA

Considering what has been outlined above, one would have said that Ghana had already got started! However, in PTD thinking, one has to always get started in every new situation where there is learning and sharing. NGLWG had to study the PROLINNOVA International programme document circulated by our traditional international partners at ETC, Netherlands (the international secretariat of PROLINNOVA) in various meetings and at committee levels in other zones of the country in order to create an understanding and show of interest to help Ghana develop and own her PROLINNOVA programme. In northern Ghana, capacities were built in regional PTD/PID³ teams and trainings held on participatory approaches, behavioural change and other concepts. This indeed created increased awareness and interest in PROLINNOVA philosophy and potential benefits by local partners, including the ACDEP stations, the Savanna Agricultural Research Institute (CSIR–SARI), the Animal Research Institute (CSIR–ARI), MoFA and the University for Development Studies (UDS) in Tamale, northern Ghana.

The NGLWG team members in northern Ghana were tasked in groups to search the literature for any secondary data and to document the various aspects of

² PTD = Participatory Technology Development

³ PID = Participatory Innovation Development

local innovation. Similar studies were done in the southern and middle sectors of the country and the reports were fed into various zonal planning workshops. In September 2003, a National Workshop coordinated by ECASARD in Koforidua provided the forum for 30 select representatives of key stakeholders to share the information and then planned for the PROLINNOVA–Ghana programme.

Looking for things to try

The National Workshop provided the opportunity for the stakeholders to brainstorm and outlined the PROLINNOVA–Ghana programme objectives. Group work and plenary sessions were used and the suggested objectives clustered into broad areas to include institutional mainstreaming of PROLINNOVA approaches, capacity building, documentation and dissemination, promotion of genuine farmer groups, gender and policy. The groups also suggested the various activities, roles, time schedules and the resources and inputs required. A team of three persons was tasked to put the document into proper form and submit to the National Steering Committee made up of NGO, MoFA, farmer and research representatives from the zones. For implementation purposes, zonal action plan development needed to fit or contribute to the national PROLINNOVA–Ghana programme in the same way as the national programme should be seen to contribute to the PROLINNOVA International programme.

Results, outcomes and lessons

One National Steering Committee with two programmes (northern and southern zones)

During the period 2003–05, the Ghana programme made significant achievements including awareness creation on PROLINNOVA among current and potential partners, inventory and documentation of local innovations, planning and review workshops at zonal and national levels, training and participation in PROLINNOVA International Meetings and Workshops in the Philippines, Ethiopia and Uganda. During this period, the national programme also faced challenges because of lack of clear focus and effective coordination and communication with the zonal programme in the north. Budgets were very low for zonal activities and stagnation set in during the period 2004–05. In the given circumstances and motivated by the good prospects of PROLINNOVA, the National Steering Committee in its 2005 annual meeting resolved unanimously to give autonomy to the two zones to each directly contract, implement and report on activities to the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat. The National Steering Committee, however, maintained overall management and oversight responsibility of the Ghana programme. The dynamics received the needed support from our international partners.

The northern Ghana PROLINNOVA programme therefore went on further as a result of the positive development to draw up a strategic plan for the period 2007–10 with the focus on mainstreaming PROLINNOVA principles in rural development and agricultural research and development programmes of local partners and stakeholders aimed at poverty reduction in northern Ghana.

Local and international partnerships for joint learning and sharing

Participatory video for R&D

As part of the partnership activities, PROLINNOVA–Ghana benefited from an international training on participatory video (PV) as a powerful tool for empowering farmers and community people to tell their own stories about their innovations and worldviews. The training experience was later replicated in-country by PROLINNOVA–Ghana playing host to a training session held in northern Ghana in 2004 and facilitated by CSIR–ARI and CECIK (Centre for Cosmivision and Indigenous Knowledge). PROLINNOVA–Ghana North has since taken this unique opportunity by adapting PV as an R&D tool for enhancing interaction, documentation and dissemination with farmer groups and community members. The CSIR–ARI has employed this tool in crop-livestock integrated studies with communities in the Tolon-Kumbungu District, improved guinea fowl management studies in some communities in the Savelugu-Nanton District and *siella* mineral lick studies in communities in the Saboba District, all in northern Ghana. In collaboration with the CIDA⁴-funded project Farmer Responsive Mechanisms in Extension and Research (FARMER) in northern Ghana, a PV was also done with the Kolebpor Pig Growers Association in Lawra, Upper West Region.

Some key PROLINNOVA–Ghana publications for sharing

Apart from the project documents and reports, some publications have been made – though scanty – with assistance from our international partners. Most can be found on the PROLINNOVA website and include

- Building multi-stakeholder partnerships to promote farmer experimentation and innovation in Ghana
- Research to promote farmer innovation: the case of *siella* mineral lick for livestock in northern Ghana.

Some of our members were also encouraged to contribute papers toward the publication of a booklet on PID to be published by PROLINNOVA International. The opportunity for researchers in the Ghana programme is that some points could be hauled in towards their promotions at the work place from these publications. In academia, researchers are told to publish or perish! However, it appears more rewarding in my view when such PROLINNOVA publications can be traced to tangible things and practice in the rural communities.

International Partners Meetings and possibly missed opportunity

⁴ CIDA = Canadian International Development Agency

The Ghana programme has participated in these annual meetings, including the one in Senegal in early 2007, and indeed successfully hosted the one in early 2008 held in Tamale, Ghana. The beauty of this event is not just reviewing the programme but also the learning of new facilitation approaches and testing the organizational capacities of the host partners. The exposure to field visits to interact with innovators in diverse sociocultural settings and by people from different parts of the world provides each year a new horizon to think about R&D and rural development. The visiting international partners on field trips have eyes in search of what is new. A colleague from Nepal in the recent Ghana location visit remarked that, while in the community trying to see the local innovations, he was only able to see one on his way back when we visited the Paga Crocodile Pond. The innovation was that the local community has been able, with time, to blend local knowledge of managing the pond and crocodiles with present-day tourism for incomes. I agreed with him and started wondering whether there has been any community-led documentation on this innovation.

Reflection on the experience of Ghana having hosted this event revealed that the planned limited number of invitations meant that it did not include many active stakeholders and non-stakeholders in the host country who could have benefited from the proceedings if an appropriate or special session had been provided. Because of the limited budget, there was very minimal or no propaganda! Could this have been a missed opportunity?

Strengthening local collaboration in programme management

For country programmes, it may be appropriate to begin in a small way and then grow. The coordinating NGO and carefully selected multidisciplinary core team serving as the nerve centre should be able to reach out to committed individuals, other NGOs, the research, university and other relevant government organizations such as the Ministry of Agriculture for participation. The Ghana South programme worked closely with the University of Cape Coast, thus involving lecturers and students. The Middle Belt activities were centred on GOAN, an NGO, and expertise drawn from the CSIR–Crop Research Institute.

The Ghana North programme appeared unique in the sense that ACDEP, the coordinating NGO, has its member associations dotted throughout the three northern regions, who could easily reach out to farmers in the field for implementation. The involvement of MoFA in the decentralized District Assembly system was an added strength, since the extension agents live in the communities and play roles in organizing the farmer groups. CSIR–SARI, CSIR–ARI and UDS were and are still key local partners providing needed research backstopping and training. Indeed, the partnership in the Ghana programme has grown to involve the participation of other NGOs, such as CECIK and COMPAS (Comparing and Supporting Endogenous Development), who come in with a wealth of knowledge on cosmovision and aspects of social innovations.

True farmer-research-extension linkage

Though research and extension workers may have some knowledge about a commodity or resource, the strength and sustainability of the innovation could go far if they – through the PID process – discover that farmers or community members possess the resources and are doing something about it in their own way and interest and gain some benefits. The interaction process and interest is sustained because the problems and unknowns from the interaction will begin to emerge, requiring tested solutions for a beneficial change. The commitment of a farmer or community to sustain a process is total if only you start with what they know and that which is their felt need. In the case of research and extension workers, more may have to be done beyond the personal commitment.

Endogenous resources mobilization

So far, the local innovations being documented by PROLINNOVA–Ghana largely involve the mobilization of resources from within the community. In this vein, farmers are also able to point out what needs to be done but appear challenged financially when payable knowledge or certain resources need to be brought in from outside their system. Funding from outside appears to have the temptation that the farmers or community members lose control over the innovation process, for obvious reasons. The northern Ghana programme is in the process of taking advantage of the opportunity provided by the PROLINNOVA International Programme to pilot the Local Innovation Support Fund (LISF) in which groups of innovators are empowered financially based on submitted proposals for a sustainable management of such a fund to control the innovation process and derive increased benefits. He who pays the piper calls the tune. Farmers can then mobilize their resources and, in the event, pay for services and demand accountability from such service providers in the value chain!

Transparency and accountability in programme financial management

In general, transparency is a key ingredient in teamwork, the absence of which can negatively affect the prospects of team gelling. This is particularly so when it comes to project finances. The issue here is not about money-driven relationships but to keep team members together and sufficiently informed about what the programme has attracted each time from the submitted plan of activities and budget. In the Ghana North programme, the experience is that the core team members are involved in deciding and drawing up disbursement guidelines. Currently, we are employing the competitive grant scheme, where local partners are encouraged to prioritize the activities and make a proposal within the given budget ceiling. These are then reviewed by a panel of core team members and the winners get the funds, implement and report to the ACDEP Secretariat schedule officer supported by a person responsible for monitoring and evaluation. Such reports are also shared at NGLWG team meetings and workshops.

ACDEP, the coordinating NGO, does not hold all the money to its chest! Indeed, PROLINNOVA programme finances traditionally are often limited in relation to the huge activities out there in the field. No doubt, we are encouraged to look for additional local funding sources to beef up and sustain the process.

Conclusion and suggestions

PROLINNOVA–Ghana in the community of African country programmes was one of the three pioneers and is almost six years old. The coming into being of the NGLWG before and during the PROLINNOVA programme and its dynamics with the local coordinating NGO (ACDEP) to date in facilitating farmer-led experimentation could be described or characterized as a local social innovation. It may therefore be suggested that new country programmes consider such an institutional framework and the farmer-first philosophy to innovation. Furthermore, the need is to have a thorough understanding of their country situational analysis for better focusing. Identifying and seating the programme within the relevant sector development policy context of the country aimed at assisting the rural and urban poor could prove rewarding.

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