

## Guidelines for joining PROLINNOVA

*PROLINNOVA Guidelines No. 1  
(revised version of May 2011)*

### 1. Background

PROLINNOVA started in 2003 as one of the Global Partnership Programmes (GPPs) of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR). It is unique among the GPPs in that it is the only one initiated by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). These seek to serve as facilitators of multi-stakeholder interaction in innovation systems based on farmers' initiatives. They mediate between the different actors and, in particular, try to strengthen linkages between innovating/experimenting farmers and other major actors in agricultural research and development (ARD). They share the **vision of a world in which women and men farmers play decisive roles in ARD for sustainable livelihoods**. The GPP is governed by a PROLINNOVA Oversight Group (POG) made up of four persons from national networks, one person from the International Support Team (IST)<sup>1</sup> and three independent persons elected by the PROLINNOVA partners.

### 2. Who can join PROLINNOVA?

There are two "levels" of joining PROLINNOVA, i.e. at the information-exchange network level and at the Community of Practice level.

#### **a) PROLINNOVA information-exchange network**

Any individual or organisation can join the information-exchange network on Promoting Local Innovation by subscribing to the electronic listserver (yahoogroups). If you wish to join this network, contact the list manager (annie.secretario@iirr.org with cc to prolinnova@etcnl.nl) and ask to be put on the list. Any member of this list can contribute information to share with others, comment on papers or other information that is circulated, stimulate discussions, post questions and answer questions.

#### **b) PROLINNOVA Community of Practice<sup>2</sup>**

You may become part of PROLINNOVA Community of Practice (CoP) as a member network by joining forces with other individuals and/or organisations in your country<sup>3</sup> that would like to promote partnerships between farmers, extension agents/advisory services, researchers and other stakeholders (e.g. input suppliers, traders, universities, local government) to improve farming and natural resource management (NRM). The multi-stakeholder group that seeks to institutionalise this way of interacting within agricultural research, development and education should send a proposal to the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat (see below: "How can you set up a PROLINNOVA member network?").

Alternatively, you may already be engaged in such a multi-stakeholder group pursuing these aims. In that case, you can present your network to the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat and ask if it can be included under PROLINNOVA. You may also like to expand your existing network to include the missing but relevant stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> The PROLINNOVA International Support Team (IST) is composed of staff members from the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) based in the Philippines, ETC AgriCulture based in the Netherlands, the international coordinator of the HAPID (HIV/AIDS and PID) programme based in South Africa, and the international coordinator of the PROFEIS (Promoting Farmer Innovation and Experimentation in the Sahel) programme based in Senegal. The PROLINNOVA International Secretariat is currently at ETC Agriculture.

<sup>2</sup> Communities of Practice (CoPs) are "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (*Cultivating Communities of Practice*, E Wenger, R McDermott & W M Snijder, 2002)

<sup>3</sup> In most cases, the PROLINNOVA networks have started at national level; however, in large countries with very diverse conditions and/or social groups, a network has sometimes started at state/provincial level.

The International Secretariat will communicate with you about your proposal and, if necessary, help you develop it further for presentation to the PROLINNOVA Oversight Group (POG), which will make the final decision about inclusion in the PROLINNOVA CoP based on the criteria outlined below. The Secretariat will ask your group to outline how your proposal meets these criteria.

In principle, PROLINNOVA is led by a civil-society organisation (CSO), either an NGO or a farmer organisation (FO). NGOs have an advantage in initiating such a network because of their relative flexibility, limited bureaucracy, experience in working directly with farmers and strategic position for advocacy activities. After the NGO has been successfully brought major stakeholders into the national or sub-national network, these stakeholders may revisit the responsibility for coordination. The GPP is open to all other stakeholder groups in ARD, provided that they share the principles of PROLINNOVA and meet the requirements outlined in this document.

### 3. How would you benefit from being a member network in PROLINNOVA?

Your network can expect to:

- Learn about the experiences of others: in 1) promoting PID that builds on local innovation and initiative; and 2) building partnerships in ARD to institutionalise this approach, through exchange and analysis of cases and engaging in discussion and debate
- Receive advice from other PROLINNOVA partners – other member networks and the IST – to support your own efforts to promote and institutionalise PID
- Be kept up-to-date about recent developments, publications, events and upcoming learning opportunities (courses, conferences, scholarships etc)
- Combine forces with other member networks to engage in international policy dialogue at both global and regional level and to reinforce your ARD policy-lobbying efforts in your country, in order to influence ARD institutions and to create a favourable policy environment for PID
- Together with like-minded member networks, design and implement international activities that support your own efforts to promote and institutionalise PID (e.g. joint training in PID facilitation, participatory monitoring and evaluation, international comparative analyses and documentation, action research in local innovation funds) and access international funding for these activities
- Receive international recognition for your work
- Increase your opportunities to raise funds both nationally and internationally to support the above-mentioned activities.

### 4. What are the requirements for joining the PROLINNOVA CoP?

The types of networks that would be eligible to become part of the PROLINNOVA CoP are those in which the members:

- Include a minimum of three organisations, including at least two different types of organisation / stakeholder
- Advocate and implement an approach to ARD that involves farmers and development agents, formal researchers and other stakeholders in ARD in planning, implementing, evaluating and monitoring joint investigations and trials and in sharing the process and results, including farmer-to-farmer sharing
- Regard identification of local innovations and initiatives as entry points for planning farmer-led participatory research and development
- Seek to scale up and integrate this approach (i.e. “Participatory Innovation Development”, PID) into major institutions of agricultural/NRM research, extension and education
- Have developed a proposal for initiating a network that involves working relationships between governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in research, development and education related to ARD
- Are coordinated by an NGO or FO with proven networking and financial management capacities and systems and with at least five years’ experience in participatory approaches to ARD.

## 5. What are the roles and responsibilities of a PROLINNOVA member network?

The following minimal requirements of a national or subnational network and its coordinator apply not only for entry into the international PROLINNOVA CoP but also for remaining in it.

As a member network, you would be expected to:

- Document local innovation, local innovation processes and PID, and your efforts to institutionalise this approach
- Make information available to others about the experiences of your network in: 1) promoting PID that builds on local innovation and initiative; and 2) building partnerships in ARD to institutionalise this approach, through contributions to electronic exchange and at workshops and conferences
- Jointly raise funds – or make them available from your own organisations' resources – to be able to take part in PROLINNOVA-related activities (training, workshops, conferences etc)
- Provide advice and similar types of support to other national networks upon their request
- Engage in and document the results of participatory monitoring and evaluation of your work
- Give due recognition to the contributions of all collaborators, including farmers, in publications and presentations on your work
- Collaborate with other international members in compiling PROLINNOVA publications and reports.

The coordinator of the member network must:

- Coordinate joint planning and implementation of joint activities of the network and provide evidence of this joint planning to all members
- Facilitate communication among network members
- Coordinate an active Steering Committee (SC) that meets at least twice yearly and communicates frequently between meetings
- Be accountable to the SC
- Meet contractual requirements (in cases where contracts are made between national networks or between a national network and the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat)
- Comply with basic reporting requirements (workplans, budgets, activity and financial reports etc) even if the funds concerned go through member organisations and not the member network secretariat (this is so that an overall picture of the work of the network can be made)
- Encourage all network members to contribute (in kind, at least) to networking costs.

If these minimum requirements are not met or if an SC (not only the current coordinating organisation) wishes to cut its ties with PROLINNOVA, the national or sub-national network will no longer be regarded as part of the international PROLINNOVA CoP.

## 6. How can you set up a PROLINNOVA member network?

Any NGO or FO can express an interest to the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat to start a member network or to expand an existing network to include relevant stakeholders and develop a proposal together. A single NGO or FO will be asked to contact other organisations (or at least interested individuals in other organisations) to make a small interim core team (3 or more members) to initiate a proposal. This core team should include people from both governmental and non-governmental organisations involved in ARD. Ideally, the initial proposal would be for an inception phase of about 6–12 months that allows enough time for the following activities:

- Inventory of existing experiences in the country in promoting and institutionalising PID-like approaches
- Multi-stakeholder analysis (in one or more interactive workshops) of the experiences in the country and identification of strengths, weaknesses, gaps and challenges
- Multi-stakeholder planning of activities to scale up and integrate PID into institutions of agricultural research, extension and education in the country; these should include farmer/ community institutions at grassroots level

- Identification of at least an initial multi-stakeholder group such as an *ad hoc* advisory council to guide these activities and an NGO or FO to serve as initial secretariat (the composition of the SC may change over time as experience is gained and as new stakeholders are recognised)
- Formulation of a multi-year proposal with action plan and budget, including activities to acquire funding support, if not already available in the country.

#### **What can the IST provide at this stage?**

*The PROLINNOVA IST makes the PROLINNOVA concepts and activities widely known and is open to receive enquiries and expressions of interest. Organisations wishing to start a PROLINNOVA network must make a clear commitment to this. If they take the initiative and invest own time to form a core team of interested individuals/organisations in their country and to develop a concept note or proposal for an inception phase, the IST will provide advice about the content and format of the proposal for the inception phase and the strategy to access funds and will help make contacts to sources of funding.*

### **7. What can the IST provide to member networks?**

The IST has a small amount of funds from the GFAR for international PROLINNOVA coordination, administration, methodology development, web-based knowledge management, documentation, editing and publishing, and coordinating international policy dialogue involving CSOs. Advisory support from the IST to the member networks (e.g. on approaches and methods in multi-institutional partnership building, workshop facilitation techniques, approaches to inventorying and comparing experiences, or assisting in acquisition of funds) can normally be provided only from a distance by email or Skype.

If a new network that has been welcomed by the POG into the PROLINNOVA CoP would like to have ongoing backstopping support from the IST (e.g. for training, coaching, advice, support in facilitation, documentation, information and communication, backstopping visits etc), the network will have to include these costs (time and travel) in the budget for its activities. The IST does not have a core budget for backstopping member networks. Backstopping visits to member networks will normally be possible only if they have allocated funds for this. However, if someone in the IST will be in a country for another purpose, s/he could take up contact with the network there. Likewise, if someone from the network will be in the vicinity of an IST member, s/he could take up contact with her/him.

Organisations that are interested in setting up a multi-stakeholder partnership to promote local innovation in their country need to generate their own funds for the activities they plan.

If the IST manages to generate funds for an International Partners Workshop (IPW), it may cover the costs of one person per member network to attend, depending on the amount of funding available. Decisions about covering costs of participation in the IPW, which usually takes place annually, are made by the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat in consultation with the IST member(s) in direct contact with the member networks (the “backstoppers”). A member network may approach the POG with any complaints the network may have about what it considers to be unfair treatment by the Secretariat.

The backstoppers may come from the existing IST or be additional persons drawn into the IST to meet the additional work demands as an increasing number of member networks request support. The additional persons may be experienced persons from well-established member networks. A new member network may also make backstopping arrangements with a person/ organisation of its choice outside of the IST; these arrangements would then not be made through the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat, although it might be able to recommend suitable persons/organisations.

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