

PROLINNOVA–GHANA ANNUAL REPORT 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

The Ghana Country Platform (CP) had been very active in 2020. The CP is implementing two projects under the Prolinnova umbrella, namely the SULCI-FaNS (Scaling Up Local Capacity to Innovate for Food and Nutrition Security) and Ethnoveterinary Medicine Innovation (Ethnovet) projects, with field activities in two and four learning sites, respectively. The National Steering Committee (NSC) and Core Support Team were strengthened through replacements with new and younger persons, and have actively provided governance, coordination and technical support to the CP. The COVID-19 pandemic had been the biggest issue, for which appropriate measures have been adopted to ensure implementation of activities.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

a) Key activities implemented and achievements made

i) Identification, documentation and dissemination of local innovations: In the SULCI-FaNS project, 30 local innovations (15 per action-learning site) were identified and jointly verified with community members and the local multistakeholder platforms (MSPs). The innovations comprise 18 by women and 12 by men and fall in the domains of local nutritious foods, livestock improvement, organic crop protection and soil improvement, agro-processing and environmental protection. All the innovations have been fully documented, and major ones were disseminated through annual National Farmers Days, local policy-dialogue workshops and community learning sessions.

In the Ethnovet project, 24 innovations selected with farmers, district institutional stakeholders and research scientists have been profiled; 20 of the innovations/herbal preparations will benefit from scientific validation, development and promotion.

Two books have been published on PID cases and local innovation documentation, respectively, under the previous Proli-FaNS project, and distributed among stakeholders (farmer leaders, local MSP members, university lecturers, local chiefs, field extension staff and Misereor) and national platform members. Two hundred brochures on SULCI-FaNS and 150 brochures on the Ethnovet project were printed and distributed among local and national stakeholders for public awareness and publicity on the projects and on Prolinnova's approach.

ii) Participatory Innovation Development (PID): Eight priority innovations (4 per action-learning site) have been jointly selected for PID or farmer-led joint research to improve their value or benefits. The selected innovations comprised six by women and two by men, and are in the areas of improving local foods, livestock feed supplementation and agro-processing for income generation. Five of the eight innovations are under various stages of farmer-led experimentation or PID with women's innovation groups and male farmers, facilitated by nutritionists, agricultural scientists, field extensionists and members of local MSPs.

iii) Recognition of women innovators: In November 2020, ten deserving innovators (7 women and 3 man) were awarded with certificates and small farm inputs through the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) at the annual district-level National Farmers Day held in Bongo and Walewale Districts (action-learning sites). The awardees exhibited and shared their innovations, which are

making a significant improvement to their lives. This attracted media and public interest and helped create awareness on the importance of local innovation and the PID approach to food, nutrition and livelihood security.

iv) Capacity strengthening: In February 2020, six persons from the CP participated in an anglophone subregional training on local innovation, PID and gender, held in Tamale, and have constituted a core resource team for training and supporting local partners and farmers on using Prolinnova's concepts and approach in extension and farming. Subsequently in June, step-down PID trainings were conducted at two action-learning sites for 23 participants (9 female, 14 male) from local project partner organisations, farmer representatives, MSPs and CP technical support team members. The trainees have since been using their knowledge and skills to support identification and documentation of innovations, planning PID processes and educating farmers, women's groups and field staff on application of the PID approach in extension programming and in farming activities. It is estimated that about 1000 farmers and 50 field staff have been involved. Additionally, in September 2020, NGO partners, stakeholders and MSP members in the learning sites were trained on the local innovation support facility (LISF) mechanism for its operation from 2021.

In the Ethnovet project, two persons from the University for Development Studies and the Tamale Teaching Hospital laboratory have been selected and assisted to apply for international Phd scholarships to study in a Swiss university. Their fieldwork will be conducted in northern Ghana in the context of the project and supervised by the project partners, namely the Animal Research Institute and the Swiss Public and Tropical Health Institute. We await the outcome of the awards.

v) Networking at local, national, regional and international level and policy dialogue:

- Staff of NABOCADO, site implementing partner, shared innovations and the PID approach at the regional Research & Extension Liaison Committee meetings for promotion by formal research and extension institutions.
- District stakeholders policy-dialogue meetings on SULCI-FaNS and the PID approach were held in September 2020 at the two action-learning sites for a total of 39 persons (30m/9f) from government institutions local political authorities, local NGOs, community opinion leaders, innovators, MSP members and local radio stations.
- The NSC held two meetings within the year and looked at fundraising issues and expansion of national networking, thereby identifying new potential partners and relevant networks. The NSC chair, who is based in Accra, has since initiated contacts and introduced Prolinnova to the Director-General of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the national head of the Science, Technology and Policy Research Institute (STEPRI) of the CSIR.
- A three-member internal committee of the NSC was set up to develop a long-term Strategic Plan for Prolinnova-Ghana in the context of Prolinnova's 2021–25 strategy. The purpose is to engender stronger national networking and advocacy on promoting farmer innovation and a participatory farmer-led research approach, guide the development of self-determined programme priorities and a strategic focus, and reposition for financial sustainability.
- Prolinnova-Ghana participated in the 2020 African Partners Workshop and the annual SULCI-FaNS partners workshops held online in October and November 2020, respectively, and shared experiences and achievements on PID policy dialogue, institutionalisation of LISFs, gender and project sustainability, among others. Capacity needs and plans for 2021 were also identified.
- In the Ethnovet project, district-level platforms have been established in each of the four project sites to promote learning and advocacy for mainstreaming ethnoveterinary medicine into the formal animal healthcare system. Members comprise farmers and herbal practitioners, community animal health volunteers, representatives of relevant local institutions, veterinary shop operators and veterinary practitioners.

vi) Fundraising: Efforts to source additional funding to support the CP's activities did not yield positive results in 2020.

b. Difficulties /challenges

The incidence of COVID-19 restricted movements and stakeholder and community meetings, and thus slowed down project implementation. We responded by including COVID-19 education and also provided protection devices / materials such as nose masks, washing soap and hand sanitisers to help community beneficiaries protect themselves. We also increased the use of IT communication methods for project implementation. The CP faced a difficulty in securing additional funding to support and expand activities, exacerbated by global dwindling development funding situation and COVID-19.

3. SELF-ASSESSMENT OF NETWORK FUNCTIONING

The CP achieved only up to 70% of its set objectives for 2020, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited networking, community activities and policy-dialogue activities. We will devise innovative communication methods to improve stakeholder engagement in 2021. The governance of the CP was made more effective by strengthening and diversifying expertise in the NSC and Core Support Team. The NSC met more regularly and supported the CP more effectively.

The CP Secretariat in ACDEP was strengthened further with the assignment of a full-time coordinator (Margaret Kyiu), who is being supported by the SULCI-FaNS project coordinator to run field activities. Relationships with other CPs, the Subregional Coordinator for West & Central Africa, the International Support Team and the Prolinnova Oversight Group remained effective, leading to improved learning. However, fundraising at the CP and international level remained a challenge.

4. CONCLUSION

Prolinnova–Ghana made good progress in achieving its objectives despite the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The local partners, stakeholders and communities have had significant exposure to PID and are showing buy-in, in that they are using the PID approach more in their agricultural and livelihood activities. Our focus on empowering and capacitating rural women was sustained, and planned targets for women were met such that women made up 70–80% of the people participating in and benefitting from PID and trainings at institutional and community levels.