

PROLINNOVA Guidelines No. 10

Guiding principles for local-level multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs)

The intention of drawing up these guiding principles is to support MSPs at the local level in ensuring genuine participation of stakeholders, good internal and external communication, transparency, accountability and mutual trust.

1. The MSP should be composed of diverse stakeholders: researchers, development agents, universities, non-governmental organisations, government departments, farmer groups including other resource-user groups such as fishers and pastoralists etc. The diversity should be in terms of the organisations represented in the MSP as well as specialisation/ focus of the organisation such as education, agriculture, water, soil management, sociology, community mobilisation and participation, education, ecology, innovation, nutrition, monitoring and evaluation, research etc. This diversity will not only support networking, sharing and learning but will also provide technical support to the project and the CP when required. This does not mean, however, that people from all these different organisations should form part of the local-level MSP, as a large number of members would make the platform unwieldy. The emphasis is on diversity of members. A manageable local-level MSP might have 7–15 participants. It would also be possible to have a relatively small group of core members plus other participants who may change as the learning agenda changes.
2. The project will be implemented within small geographical areas within one or two districts/sub-counties or communes, but the MSP should cover a wider area so as to facilitate broad sharing and learning and, more importantly, to facilitate effective advocacy and policy dialogue. Therefore, the MSP should cover a whole district/sub-county/commune, i.e. the recognised government administrative and policymaking structures at the local level. Moreover, if the MSP covers the whole district/sub-county/commune, it will be easier to bring policy dialogue up to the national level.
3. Participation in the MSP is voluntary and no sitting allowances will be paid. Only necessary costs¹ such as for travel, communication and meals will be reimbursed, subject to availability of funds.
4. The MSP should develop a charter or bylaws to provide general rules and regulations on the management and operation of the platform. The guidelines should include structure of the MSP, gender composition, election process and terms of office, voting process, roles of MSP members, procedures for calling and conducting meetings, establishment of sub-committees, procedures for communication, inclusion and expulsion of MSP stakeholders etc.

¹ The necessary costs are to be defined by each County Platform.

5. The composition of the MSP should ensure gender balance, and the members should have a clear understanding of gender issues such as gender equality, women's and girls' rights including reproductive and sexual rights, women's access to justice and participation in decision making, and gender equity. To allow women's participation, certain mechanisms may need to be put in place, e.g. related to the location, timing or length of MSP meetings.
6. The MSP should have the capacity to establish and strengthen linkages (both horizontal and vertical) with various partners and stakeholders and at various levels. This networking should strengthen the capacity of the MSP in implementation of activities, resource mobilisation, technical support, advocacy and policy dialogue, documentation and information dissemination etc.
7. The MSP should have members who have the capacity to facilitate the operations of the MSP including moderating discussions and providing opportunities for dialogue, voicing opinions of the stakeholders and articulating the goals of the project and of PROLINNOVA.
8. The MSP should have a clear communication and feedback mechanism to its stakeholders and other partners. These mechanisms should be effective and provide accurate and clear information on the project, MSP operations etc.
9. The MSP should not be limited to the operations and timeframe of the Proli-FaNS project but should be established as a long-term platform that will ensure active participation, discussions and negotiations among stakeholders. The MSP should develop appropriate sustainability mechanisms that will ensure that the MSP continues to function beyond the project period.
10. A few members of the local-level MSP should engage in national-level policy dialogue, funds permitting. In that case, they should take a well-formulated message from the MSP to bring to the national level.