



Vision: A world where women and men farmers play decisive roles in ARD for sustainable livelihoods

In several countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, diverse organisations have joined forces to promote local innovation processes in agriculture and natural resource management (NRM). After analysing their own experiences in agricultural research and development (ARD), they formed Country/Regional Platforms (CPs/RPs), designed their own programmes and agreed on joint international activities for mutual learning and policy dialogue. This Global Partnership Programme (GPP) is a community of practice that is built from the bottom up, in the spirit of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR).

PROLINNOVA is an NGO-initiated international multistakeholder platform to promote local innovation processes in ecologically oriented agriculture and NRM. It focuses on recognising the **dynamics** of indigenous knowledge (IK) and enhancing capacities of farmers (including pastoralists, fishers and forest dwellers) to adjust to change – to develop their own site-appropriate systems and institutions of resource management so as to gain food security, sustain their livelihoods and safeguard the environment. The essence of sustainability lies in the capacity to adapt.

The network builds on and scales up farmer-led approaches to participatory development that start with finding out how farmers create new and better ways of doing things. Understanding the rationale behind local innovation transforms how research and extension agents view local people. This experience stimulates interest on both sides to enter into joint action. Local ideas are further developed in a process that integrates IK and scientific knowledge. Joint action and analysis lead to social learning.

How it all started

PROLINNOVA was conceived in 1999, when Southern and Northern NGOs – supported by GFAR, the NGO Committee (CGIAR) & the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs – met in France to explore how participatory approaches to ARD based on local initiatives could be scaled up. Participants asked ETC, a Dutch NGO, to help build up a GPP from country level. NGOs in Asia and Africa Asia facilitated multistakeholder design of country platforms (CPs) that agreed to:

- document local innovation and experimentation by smallholder farmers and communities;
- strengthen links between farmers, development agents, scientists and other actors to refine local innovations and encourage others to try them out;
- create awareness of and skills in participatory innovation development (PID) through a variety of learning mechanisms;
- develop and expand mechanisms that give farmers more influence over formal research & extension;
- institutionalise PID approaches in research, development and education.

PROLINNOVA seeks to:

- demonstrate the effectiveness of farmer-led participatory innovation for sustainable development
- build partnerships in agricultural innovation
- enhance capacities of farmers, researchers and extension agents in participatory approaches
- facilitate decentralised funding mechanisms to promote local innovation
- engage in national and regional policy dialogue to stimulate and enhance local innovation processes
- set up platforms for reflection, analysis and learning about promoting local innovation processes
- integrate participatory approaches to farmer-led innovation into institutions of research, extension and learning.

Participatory design of the GPP

Starting in 2003, organisations engaged in ARD in Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda – supported by IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) – collected in-country experiences in recognising local innovation and promoting PID. They held workshops to analyse their experiences and developed plans to scale up PID. From 2004, DGIS (Dutch Directorate General for International Cooperation) partly funded the three CPs to realise their plans and supported similar processes in Cambodia, Nepal, Niger, South Africa, Sudan and Tanzania.

In 2006, a francophone network PROFEIS expanded in West Africa to include Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal. An Andes group started in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. In 2007–13, CPs in Cameroon, India, Kenya, Mozambique and Nigeria and the Philippines joined PROLINNOVA.

Activities differ between CPs depending on their history, experience and self-identified capacities to recognise IK dynamics, engage in PID and scale it up. However, common elements include:

- bringing farmers, extensionists and scientists together to plan and implement joint experiments, starting from jointly prioritised local innovations;
- creating national and subnational multistakeholder platforms to learn jointly about local innovation and PID and its institutionalisation;

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- building capacities to identify and document local innovation and to engage in PID, through training workshops for farmers, extensionists and scientists
- participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) of joint activities, outcomes and impacts;
- creating awareness and influencing policy through innovation fairs, publications, mass media and dialogue with policymakers in research, extension & education to create enabling conditions for PID.

At annual meetings since 2004, country-level partners define the international networking, learning and other support mechanisms needed to reinforce their work. Participatory planning at international level thus mirrors the approach at national and grassroots level: the partners develop their own programme based on self-defined needs and interests.

Structure of the decentralised network

In each country, normally a local NGO convenes the major ARD stakeholders. It serves as secretariat for a **National Steering Committee (NSC)** with people from research, extension and education, other NGOs, farmer groups and, in some cases, the private sector. The NSC defines the CP activities; gives strategic guidance; helps mobilise resources; and is the apex structure for accountability. A smaller core team coordinates day-to-day implementation of activities.

An **International Support Team (IST)** supports the national and regional activities through coordination, capacity strengthening, coaching, policy dialogue, web-based information management, networking and publishing. The IST comprises IIRR (Philippines), ETC Foundation (Netherlands) and IED–Afrique (Senegal).

The **PROLINNOVA Oversight Group (POG)** serves as governance mechanism to ensure accountability of the GPP to the CPs, their constituencies and donors.

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The POG is made up of four people from CPs, one from the IST and four independent persons, elected by the CPs and the IST to serve 2-year terms. The POG meets face-to-face at least once a year and communicates otherwise by email and Skype. It has drawn up several guidelines for the GPP, to be found under www.prolinnova.net/content/prolinnova-guidelines.

Participatory learning and mentoring

In 2004, the first **International Partners Workshop (IPW)** was hosted by AgriService Ethiopia (ASE) / PROLINNOVA–Ethiopia. Local farmers explained how

their innovations helped them achieve food security. Government and NGO participants from each CP shared experiences in farmer–extension–research–education partnerships and planned joint activities.

In 2005, the IPW was hosted by Environmental Alert / PROLINNOVA–Uganda prior to the FARA (Forum on Agricultural Research in Africa) General Assembly, so that PROLINNOVA partners could join the pre-plenary meeting to set up an NGO ARD consortium in Africa. Since then, IPW hosts have been:

- 2006 CEDAC, PROLINNOVA–Cambodia
- 2007 IED–Afrique, PROFEIS, Senegal
- 2008 ACDEP, PROLINNOVA–North Ghana
- 2009 LI-BIRD, PROLINNOVA–Nepal
- 2010 ETC Netherlands (PROLINNOVA Secretariat)
- 2011 PELUM–Tz, PROLINNOVA–Tanzania
- 2012 ADAF–Gallè, PROFEIS–Mali
- 2013 KARI & World Neighbors, PROLINNOVA–Kenya
- 2014 CEDAC, PROLINNOVA–Cambodia.

Capacity strengthening is central to PROLINNOVA. IIRR gave **international training in PID facilitation** in the Philippines (2004), Uganda (2006), Ethiopia (2007) and Kenya (2009). The participants trained research and extension staff in their own countries. With Nuffic funds, ETC gave similar training in Kenya in 2013 and in Uganda in early 2014.

In 2006, PELUM–Tz gave an international **course on policy dialogue**. A mini-workshop on this was held at the 2007 IPW in Senegal. Further training in policy dialogue was given in 2009 in The Netherlands.

A **writershop on gender issues** in PID, based on the principle of learning through joint documentation by CP partners, was held in 2008 in Uganda; plus sessions on gender during several IPWs.

Similar **writershops on piloting Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs)** were held in 2008 in Ghana and 2012 in Mali, prior to publishing documentation.

An **M&E** framework with guidelines for the global and local PROLINNOVA tracking of results was developed in 2006. An international workshop to learn from the M&E experiences was held in Ethiopia in 2010. With support from CIRAD (France), the CPs developed a **participatory impact assessment** guideline in 2010.

South–South mentoring & crossvisits between CPs enhance mutual learning and strengthen capacities to build partnerships in ARD. African consultants in 2012 facilitated self-assessment of experiences and lessons learnt in multistakeholder partnership in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

Thematic initiatives

CPs with common interests in specific themes have joined forces in several initiatives:

- **Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs)**. Action research in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nepal, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda helped to develop mechanisms to channel ARD funds to farmer innovators, so they can lead joint experimentation and accelerate local innovation processes. After start-up support from DURAS (Promoting Sustainable Development in Agricultural Research Systems), co-funding was provided by Rockefeller Foundation

through the Farmer Access to Innovation Resources (FAIR) project. The CPs are finding ways to integrate LISFs into existing institutions in their countries.

- **Farmer-led documentation (FLD).** PROLINNOVA, Insight and COMPAS (Comparing & Supporting Endogenous Development) piloted participatory video in Ghana to share local innovations and influence policy. In 2006, PELUM–Uganda, PROLINNOVA and Oxfam–Novib held an international FLD workshop in Uganda. FLD was facilitated in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Niger, South Africa and Sudan.
- **HIV/AIDS and PID (HAPID).** In 2008–11 PROLINNOVA–SA coordinated action research in Mozambique and South Africa to explore implications of HIV/AIDS for PID and possibilities of using the approach in work with communities confronting HIV/AIDS.
- **Integration into education.** To reinforce activities in several CPs to integrate PID into agricultural education, these CPs exchanged course designs and materials in 2009 at a workshop in Uganda.
- **PID and climate change.** In 2008–10, CPs in Nepal, Ethiopia & Niger studied how farmers innovate in the face of climate change. In 2012, the Asian initiative LINEX-CCA started in Cambodia, India and Nepal with Misereor support, and PROLINNOVA partnered with CCAFS (Climate Change, Agriculture & Food Security) to explore social-learning tools for climate-change adaptation – internationally and in country-based activities in Kenya and Senegal – as well as issues of gender, innovation and climate-change mitigation.
- **Community resilience.** In 2012, the CPs in eastern Africa initiated CLIC-SR (Combining Local Innovation Capacity with Scientific Research) to strengthen community resilience to change, with support from Rockefeller Foundation.
- **Farmer-led research.** In 2014, together with CGIAR Research Programs AAS (Aquatic Agricultural Systems) and CCAFS, PROLINNOVA is reviewing impact of farmer-led research supported by CSOs and identifying grassroots views on enhanced innovative capacity. Together with McKnight Foundation, it has started a project in Mali and Burkina Faso to support farmer-led research networks (FaReNe). A workshop on farmer-led research approaches in West Africa will be held in Ouagadougou in 2015 together with CCAFS, CORAF, McKnight Foundation, Misereor and SDC.

Networking, co-learning and policy dialogue

Working with **existing e-networks and databases**, PROLINNOVA shares concepts and experiences in participatory innovation. To bridge the digital divide, it also disseminates printed matter and seeks links with other media, e.g. radio. Information about PROLINNOVA activities is spread through magazines (e.g. *Farming Matters*, *Appropriate Technology*, *Rural Development News*), e-newsletters and Yammer.

The **PROLINNOVA website (www.prolinnova.net)** is the main tool for wider sharing. The PROLINNOVA e-group serves as an open platform about ARD that builds on and enhances local innovation processes.

Often with GFAR support, PROLINNOVA takes part in many international **ARD fora**. At the 2003 GFAR meeting in Kenya, ASE told how the CP was set up in Ethiopia. At GFAR 2004 in Mexico, Environmental Alert presented PROLINNOVA–Uganda. At the 2005 European Forum on ARD in Switzerland, LI-BIRD and Farmer Support Group

presented their partnership experiences in Nepal and South Africa. The POG chair reported on PROLINNOVA progress to GFAR 2005 in Morocco, and an IST member in 2006 in the USA. In 2006, CEDAC presented Asian experiences to APAARI (Asia Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions), and LI-BIRD in 2007. PROLINNOVA's experiences were shared at GCARD (Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development) in France (2010) and Uruguay (2012) and at PAEPARD meetings in Europe in 2011 & 2012.

At FARA's 4th General Assembly (GA) in South Africa in 2007, PROLINNOVA–SA presented the GPP in an event organised by Research Into Use (RIU), which funded farmers to prepare posters, brochures and videos to showcase their innovations and attend the GA. In 2010, PROLINNOVA partners from Mali, Niger and the IST joined FARA's GA in Burkina Faso.

PROLINNOVA collaborated with international research centres (CIAT-Africa, IFPRI and ILRI) and IIRR to hold the **Innovation Africa Symposium** in 2006 in Uganda. In 2009, it co-organised with CIAT-Asia and ICIMOD the **Innovation Asia-Pacific Symposium** in Nepal (see Resources on PROLINNOVA website).

Several PROLINNOVA partners joined the **Farmer First Revisited** conference in 2007 in the UK (www.farmer-first.org). The GPP was featured in the Innovation for Sustainable Development in Agriculture & Food (**ISDA**) symposium in June 2010 in France.

POG Co-Chair Scott Killough attended the 1st meeting of **GFRAS (Global Forum on Rural Advisory Services)** in Chile in 2010. IST members attended the 2nd GFRAS meeting (2011) in Kenya & the 3rd (2012) in Philippines.

PROLINNOVA collaborated with the EU projects **Including Smallholders in ARD (INSARD)**, focused on Africa and led by ETC, and **Joint Learning in Innovation Systems in African Agriculture (JOLISAA)**, led by CIRAD with partners in Benin, Kenya and South Africa. JOLISAA, CCAFS, AusAID, Agri-ProFocus and many others jointly organised a Week on Agricultural Innovation in Africa in Kenya in May 2013, including an **Eastern Africa Farmer Innovation Fair** and **Agricultural Innovation Systems in Africa (AISA)** workshop (aisa2013.wikispaces.com). A **West Africa Farmer Innovation Fair** will be held in 2015 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

LISF experiences were presented frequently in 2012–14, e.g. at the World Bank's Agricultural Innovation Systems workshop in Washington DC; Coady International Institute, Canada; McKnight Foundation (Minneapolis, USA); AISA workshop (Kenya); CTA Brussels Briefing on farmer-driven research (Belgium); GIZ-CGIAR workshop on demand-driven agricultural research (Feldafing, Germany) and the Agrinatura Science Days on family farming and world food systems (Vienna, Austria).

Sources of support

After inception funding from IFAD, DGIS was the main donor until 2012. Donors for specific activities include: ActionAid, CTA, EED (Church Development Service), Ford Foundation, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, GFAR, ICRAF, McKnight Foundation, Misereor, RIU, Rockefeller Foundation, SDC, World Bank & WorldFish.

The partners in the IST and CPs cover over one third of total costs themselves. They seek funds to support new national multistakeholder platforms, new thematic initiatives and core learning and networking activities.

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Some PROLINNOVA publications and papers

- *Developing technology with farmers: a trainer's guide for participatory learning*. ZED Books, London, 1997 / reprint IIRR, Silang, 2004 (also in Spanish & Arabic)
- *Farmer innovation in Africa: a source of inspiration for agricultural development*. Earthscan, London, 2001.
- *PTD for agricultural improvement: challenges for institutional integration*. IIRR, 2002.
- *Advancing PTD: case studies on integration into agricultural research, extension and education*. IIRR, 2003.
- *IK Notes* (World Bank 2004–06):
 - 70. Ethiopia: a woman innovator speaks
 - 71. Participatory video: rural people document their innovations
 - 72. Regional radio in Tunisia
 - 74. Building multi-stakeholder partnerships to promote farmer experimentation and innovation in Ghana
 - 76. Promoting local innovation: enhancing IK dynamics and links with scientific knowledge
 - 77. Burkina Faso: indigenous innovation in farmer-to-farmer extension
 - 78. South Africa: a smallholder's innovative approach to producing and exporting fruit
 - 85. Innovation Support Funds for farmer-led research
 - 96. Ethiopia: Endogenous and modern innovations
- *PTD/PID Circular* (since 1994)
 - No. 13: Top Twenty publications on PID, 2004
 - No. 14: Annotated list of journals, 2005
 - No. 15: Electronic databases and websites, 2006
 - No. 16: Local innovation and participatory R&D, 2007
- Participatory approaches to ARD / Farmer innovation as entry point to participatory research and extension / PTD where there is no researcher / Developing partnerships to promote local innovation. In: *Sourcebook on participatory research and development for sustainable agriculture and natural resource management*. CIP-UPWARD, 2005
- *Facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships*. 2006.
- *Recognising local innovation*. 2008.
- *Innovation Africa*. Earthscan, London, 2008
- Building partnerships to promote local innovation processes. In: *Farmer First Revisited*, London, 2009
- *Farmer-led joint research*. 2010.
- Farmers take the lead in research and development. In: *State of the World 2011: Innovations that nourish the planet*, Worldwatch Institute, New York, 2011.
- *Strengthening local resilience to climate change*. 2011.
- *Farmer-led documentation*. 2011.
- Providing farmers with direct access to innovation funds. In: *Agricultural Innovation Systems*. World Bank. 2012.
- *Farmer Access to Innovation Resources: findings & lessons learnt on facilitating Local Innovation Support Funds*. 2012.
- *Scaling up Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs)*. 2013.
- *Impacts of farmer-led research supported by CSOs*. 2014.

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