

# INSTITUTIONALIZING PTD THROUGH MULTI- STAKEHOLDER PLATFORMS

**I**nstitutionalizing participatory agricultural research and extension in multi-stakeholder platforms requires working with various agricultural practices, several disciplines, and myriad groups of people often with diverse interests. The engagement entails commitment to different programs operating at different stages of the project cycle, continually deconstructing and constructing, not only technology but also attitudes, norms and behaviors.

A multi-stakeholder platform such as a steering committee made up of representatives from various farmer organizations, extension and development agencies, and research institutions, have different purposes and composition. For Agriculture Man Ecology (AME), an organization that promotes sustainable low external input agriculture in South India, the way to institutionalization is by "walking on four legs" referring to the following four points:

- institutionalizing its comprehensive area approach within concentration areas, starting from one district and from there radiate into several surrounding districts. Important mechanisms in institutionalizing area programs include strengthening district working committees into stakeholder platforms, capacity building with NGO networks and farmers, capitalizing on federations of village associations
- strengthening and diversifying crop-based working groups so that they become fully autonomous, sustainable learning and action platforms; start work on other problem-focused stakeholder platforms (e.g. for dryland coarse grains and for biomass development)
- strengthening links with policymakers at the national and state levels
- institutionalizing the organization itself

Despite the diversity in actors, their capacities and limitations, gaps can be bridged among PTD actors. The box below shows the roles various actors, who despite different motivations, collaborate to institutionalize PTD in Cameroon. Other partners that played a very important role in developing and promoting the process include a rural radio and a provincial radio that regularly broadcast PTD activities.

*UNITED DESPITE DIVERSE ROLES AND MOTIVATIONS:  
THE CAMEROON EXPERIENCE*

*In 1998, partner organizations working with ISWC-Cameroon discovered the local innovation of night-paddock manuring and found it relevant for wider application. Farmers were attracted to the ISWC program because they realized that their priorities, knowledge and skills were being considered and because the program's approach differed greatly from the external interventions they had experienced previously.*

*The motivation of the scientists was quite different. The country was in an economic crisis, and funds for research had been drastically reduced. Scientists who were approached by ISWC-Cameroon to take part in the program recognized that this offered them an opportunity to escape inactivity, to embark on new paths in research (and thus publication), and to apply their knowledge and skills to addressing farmers' priorities in a concrete way.*

*The NGOs in turn, regarded the PTD approach as challenging and very relevant for their work. They were attracted to an approach rooted in farmer innovation. They also expected that participation in the program, particularly in training activities, would strengthen staff capacities and increase their renown credibility in the field. This aspect of their motivation increased still further when they saw the interest of the mass media in covering the PTD activities.*

*Source: Paul Tchawa, Felix Nkapemin and Jean-Marie Diop. Participatory Technology Development in Cameroon: The Route and Milestones in the Process of its Institutionalization*

Cases involving multi-stakeholders that were analyzed during the workshop show complex administrative and political obstacles to the institutionalization of PTD in multiple stakeholder platforms. These include--

## Motivations and roles of partners in the PTD process in Cameroon

Partners	Motivations	Roles
KEKUFAG ( Kedjom Ketingoh Union Farmers Group) in Babanki	Appreciation of their knowledge; increase in yields	Mobilization of farmers, monitoring and record keeping, spreading the approach
Kedjom Ketingoh Chiefdom	Village development	Institutional guarantee at local level
CIPCRE	Renown, strengthening the interventional capacity of its staff	Creating links between farmers and researchers, exchange visits
University of Dschang	New scope for research; possibility to publication	Proposing alternatives (add-on options) to farmers; analysis and documentation
IRAD Bambui	Escaping from inactivity; possibility to publish	Proposing alternatives (add-on options) to farmers; analysis and documentation
ISWC-Cameroon	Introducing an approach that was working well elsewhere	Provision of facilitation, training and means

### Obstacles

- Short project timeframes versus the long term time interactions and commitment required of key actors
- Great tendency of actors to work in isolation because of physical and functional separation of institutions
- Narrow understanding of "research"; limited knowledge of participatory farmer research and other PTD related methodologies
- Lack of awareness and PTD-oriented attitudes among senior officials in government agricultural bureaus and other prospective partner organizations; lack of capacity of government organizations to meet farmers' demands for inputs

- Lack of clear directives to incorporate PTD in government organizations, especially in the job descriptions, standard procedures in fund disbursement, research review, and monitoring and evaluation
- Lack of farmer influence in higher levels of research reviews
- Lack of effective communication mechanisms to exchange views on project implementation and related activities in the institutionalization process
- Lack of clear mechanism by which farmers can access inputs for technologies; farmer organizations' inability to meet technical demands (e.g., seeds)

## Will we lose focus?

The wider the scale of operations, the greater the risk of losing control. Working with multi-stakeholder platforms presents this challenge. With PTD's requirements for quality in its processes, technical support, social interactions and strategic plans, advocates in India's AME are concerned that PTD would lose its focus as it happens sooner rather than later with all participatory methodologies that are brought to scale.

Once it began engaging in lobbying and policy advocacy, AME realized the dangers of losing touch with field level realities, acknowledging that "being connected with them has been our strength."

Faced with crashing farm gate prices in the face of globalization, AME is introducing farmers in South India to more complex strategies. Stakeholders, however ask themselves whether they are ready to deal with global competition? Are there alternative routes and new niches for dryland farmers?

### Issues

- How far can PTD be scaled up without losing its essential characteristics? However good training programs and strategic support are, how far can it go without losing focus?
- Given the inherent qualities and limitations of PTD, would it be more realistic to scale up a more standardized, structured approach, which can be linked to PTD processes that builds on rather than institutionalizes PTD?
- Can PTD become part of an alternative route to globalization?

## What has worked

FARM-Africa, which seeks to generate and transfer agricultural technology for food security in Southern Ethiopia shows that PTD could be institutionalized with multiple partners, and has learned the following lessons from its joint learning experience in farmer participatory research--

### *LESSONS FROM MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORMS IN ETHIOPIA FARM-AFRICA (1991-1998)*

- *PTD takes time. Allow for project start-up period, slow change in attitudes, changing roles, and unforeseen developments. Three years is too short to bring about change. Previous experience should be recognized because it builds confidence, credibility and a network of champions.*
- *Adopt a multifaceted approach to farmers participatory research (FPR). Include training, research studies and participatory on-farm trials (POFTs)*
- *Continuously and regularly monitor and evaluate the process of FPR and technology. Review progress, identify challenges, derive lessons and design the next steps in relation to the main activities of FPR*
- *Combine theoretical training with hands-on sessions.*
- *Involove senior staff in training events to influence the management of local organizations and their policy towards FPR.*
- *Use POFTs to stimulate the adoption and adaptation of technologies by farmers and to strengthen farmers' experimental capabilities. Monitor how these technologies spread to other farmers in order to see the adoption rate and the paths of dissemination as well as technological adaptations*
- *Establish support structures. Organize coordinating bodies at various levels (policy, technical and local implementation). Create links with the wider community of farmers to encourage information dissemination. Work closely with local government agencies and NGOs.*

*Ejigu Jonfa, Barry Pound, Endreas Geta, Ousman Suru, Furgassa Bedada. "Institutionalization of Farmer Participatory Research in Southern Ethiopia: A Joint Learning Experience.*

PTD has greater chances of getting institutionalized if it is promoted by healthy and accountable support organizations that evolve long-term perspectives. The South Indian organization AME realized that radical changes were needed for institutionalization to succeed. Among others, it found that it must transform itself from a foreign funded project with limited accountability to an Indian society, into a fully-fledged Indian organization, accountable to its trustees and stakeholders. It required the AME team and partner institutions to change their mindset, especially in terms of sustainability. Instead of depending on a single donor, AME entered into agreements with a variety of donors, foreign as well as Indian. From positioning itself as a "free service provider," it is shifting towards being a "strategic partnership builder." Instead of operating on project mode, it lengthened its time horizons to medium and long-term perspectives.

Experimentation continues to be a key element as multi-stakeholder platforms engage not only the challenges of poverty but also those of gender, caste and other sociocultural blocks. It is essential that intervention be specific to the location as well as socio-cultural structures.

## **Networking and Linkworking**

Intrinsic to PTD, and particularly essential in the dynamics of multi-stakeholder platforms is networking. This function may be refined to spin off a new task, dubbed by Ueli Scheuermeier as "linkworking." The matrix outlined at the workshop contrasts the two roles and their roles in institutionalization.

Experiences in institutionalizing PTD in multi-stakeholder platforms, challenge the concepts behind PTD itself, underscoring more than anything that it is by processing real life experience that organizations can thrive to meet their missions.

	<b>Networking</b>	<b>Linkworking</b>
What is..	A network is an installation for organizing the exchange among the members of the network. Very often it is formalized in one way or the other. The simplest networks are mailing-lists or newsgroups.	A linkwork doesn't exist. Linkworking is an activity.
What is..	Networking is the activity of setting up a network and maintaining it.	Linkworking is the highly proactive work of continuously searching for interesting connections, and then getting people into contact with each other, sometimes even pushing them to interact.
Tasks..	Networkers are the people who manage the structure and logistics of a network. They tend to be "librarian"-type of people, ie., who collect information and deposit it somewhere for easy access by the members of the network. They might even send around news bulletins to the members about recent developments.	Linkworkers are highly experienced practitioners, who actively search out and link up various actors in order to drive the exchange process forward, and in order to hunt down synergisms and make diverse actors exploit them efficiently. An important part of linkworking is the follow-up of a link, ie. the linkworker keeps an eye on what comes out of a link s/he managed to make between two or more members, and prods them to continue to interact and make any emerging results available for the other members of a network.
Interaction..	Networks are a lot better, if a linkworker acts in them. There are far too many networks, that exist only on paper or on server, because the networker is not really linkworking.	Linkworkers can be much more effective and efficient, if they work in a network. However, linkworkers can also be effective outside established networks. Often linkworkers get people into contact who then decide to establish a network for themselves. Linkworkers often operate in "proto-organizations", ie., organizations that do not yet exist on paper, but in the minds of some people.

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	<b>Networking</b>	<b>Linkworking</b>
Institutional..	There are formal and informal networks. Persistent networks tend to be owned and managed by a well established organization.	Linkworkers can be most efficient and effective, when they get a mandate from the members of a network to continuously link them up in ever changing new connections. This mandate must also include the task of being "pushy", ie. "push us to interact, if we forget to do it due to our daily workload". In hierarchical systems, linkworkers need an explicit mandate from the top to do the linking, but care must be taken, that they are without any instructive powers (that would be "coordinating", which is a different thing than linkworking).
Required Skills..	Setting up and maintaining networks is fairly easy. It is mainly the installation of exchange channels and keeping them open.	Linkworking is a highly skilled job, which encompasses technical competence, person-skills, facilitation, managerial knowledge, and a knack for organizational development and micropolitics. Truly competent linkworkers are rare.
Costs...	Establishing networks is fairly cheap. However, ensuring the quality of networks entails ensuring good linkworking.	Ensuring good linkworking costs a lot of highly qualified time. Linkworking is a major job, and cannot be done well just as a side-activity. Budgets for networks must take this into account.