

Understanding how multistakeholder partnerships work:

PROLINNOVA experiences in East Africa

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in consultation with

*PROLINNOVA Country Platforms in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda
and building on a study by*

Joseph Ssuuna, Julian Gonsalves & Laurens van Veldhuizen (2012)

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List of acronyms

CBO	community-based organisation
Cirad	<i>Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement</i> (Centre for international Cooperation in Agricultural Research for Development)
CP	Country Platform
DGIS	Directorate General for International Cooperation, Netherlands
EED	<i>Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst</i> (Church Development Service), Germany
FARA	Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa
IIRR	International Institute of Rural Reconstruction
INADES	<i>Institut Africain pour le Développement Économique et Social</i> (African Institute for Economic and Social Development)
IPW	International Partners Workshop
JOLISAA	Joint Learning in Innovation Systems in African Agriculture
KARI	Kenya Agricultural Research Institute
LISF	Local Innovation Support Fund
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture (Food Security and Cooperatives)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSP	multistakeholder partnership
NARO	National Agricultural Research Organisation
NGO	nongovernmental organisation
NRM	natural resource management
NSC	National Steering Committee
PELUM	Participatory Ecological Land Use Management
PID	participatory innovation development
PROLINNOVA	Promoting Local Innovation in ecologically oriented agriculture and NRM
PSO	<i>Personele Samenwerking in Ontwikkelingslanden</i> (Personnel Cooperation in Developing Countries)

1. Introduction

Successful processes of agricultural research, innovation and development require collaboration between different types of actors and organisations – farmers, formal researchers, rural advisors, development practitioners, educational institutions and the private sector. How to set up and strengthen the partnerships between these many actors with different modalities of work and different perspectives on development is a topic of research in itself. PROLINNOVA is studying this in the process of partnership engagement, as a source of internal learning and improvement and also in order to provide lessons for others.

This paper is based on the main findings in this continuing process of action research into multistakeholder partnership (MSP) processes within the framework of the international PROLINNOVA network. The main clusters of evidence about MSP processes in PROLINNOVA that provide a basis for this paper are: i) an internal review of initial experiences in nine countries completed in 2009; ii) an external, participatory study of MSPs in three countries in East Africa completed in 2011; and iii) a stocktaking exercise in 2014 within the PROLINNOVA network, including these three countries; and iv) notes and reflections of the authors, who have been “backstopping” these and other PROLINNOVA MSPs to facilitate their emergence and development over the past 15 years. We distil some key lessons, insights and recommendations that could be applied more widely to MSPs in agricultural research and development (ARD).

PROLINNOVA¹ was set up originally as a Global Partnership Programme (GPP) under the umbrella of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR). It seeks to build an international learning network to promote local innovation processes in ecologically oriented agriculture and natural resource management (NRM). A central feature of PROLINNOVA is the self-establishment of autonomous Country Platforms (CPs) made up of people from diverse groups that are stakeholders in agriculture and NRM: people from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), research and extension organisations, education and training institutes and – in some cases – farmer organisations and the private sector. Together, these actors analyse the situation of ARD in their country and jointly plan how to link local people’s innovation and development initiatives to the activities of other stakeholders in ARD. The CP promotes farmer-led participatory experimentation and investigation – which PROLINNOVA partners call “participatory innovation development (PID) – and tries to integrate this approach into formal ARD institutions in the country. The MSPs at national level serve as platforms for sharing, learning and strategising how to bring about institutional and policy change to create an enabling environment for local innovation and PID. In a small number of districts within the country, there are similar MSPs that are more directly engaged in PID with farmers – and are learning from analysing this experience. In most cases, the MSPs at national and subnational level are hosted and coordinated by NGOs.

The idea of PROLINNOVA was conceived at an international workshop of organisations from North and South held in Rambouillet, France, in December 1999. The workshop participants gave ETC Foundation, a Netherlands-based NGO, the mandate to host the network secretariat and to generate interest in the network, especially among donors in the North. Over the years, methodological, technical and capacity-building support to the CPs has been provided by an

¹ PROLINNOVA: **P**romoting Local **I**nnovation in ecologically oriented agriculture and natural resource management; see www.prolinnova.net

International Support Team, composed of ETC Foundation, the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) in the Philippines and – for the francophone CPs – IED (Innovation Environnement Développement) Afrique in Senegal and Jean-Marie Diop (independent advisor). The Centre for International Cooperation (Dutch acronym: CIS) at the Vrije Universiteit (VU) Amsterdam was initially also part of the International Support Team but withdrew after institutional repositioning of the VU in late 2010.

After three years of trying to acquire financial support for network activities, in late 2002 the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) agreed to provide seed money for the first three CPs (in Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda). From then on, the PROLINNOVA network gradually expanded, as multistakeholder groupings in new countries asked to join and were welcomed into the international community of practice and learning. There are now PROLINNOVA MSPs, varying greatly in age and strength, in 21 countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Since the outset, forging MSPs have been at the centre of the efforts of the network to promote local innovation and farmer-led participatory approaches to research and development. The network shares a vision of “a world where women and men farmers play decisive roles in agricultural research and development for sustainable livelihoods”.

PROLINNOVA is built on the conviction that acceleration of innovation at the local level requires open, equal and effective partnerships between farmers and other natural resource users, research and extension staff and private-sector actors, e.g. in market chains. All these actors need to collaborate in pooling their knowledge and resources, identifying relevant improvements in existing practices (i.e. technologies, how people organise themselves), experimenting with them, refining or adjusting the innovations, reflecting on and analysing the process and results and sharing these more widely – in other words, in practising PID.

The local-level MSPs practising PID are linked with the national-level MSP, which tries to create the necessary conditions for PID on the ground and to support a process of integrating the PID approach within their own organisations as well as into relevant government policy and programmes.

2. Process of continuously assessing and analysing MSPs

2.1 Initial compilation and analyses of MSP experiences

The MSPs in the different countries and the network at international level have continuously analysed the partnerships through a process of social learning with the aim to improve the interactions within the MSPs and effectiveness of the work. They also made periodic focused assessments of the MSPs.

The process of building partnerships – and, with it, the process of learning about MSPs – started with discussions (mainly by email) on ideas about and experiences with MSPs while the groupings in the different countries were drafting their plans and considering the structures needed to be able to implement their plans. This was in the period from late 1999, when the concept of PROLINNOVA was first developed, up to late 2002, when the pilot funding for the first three CPs was obtained from IFAD. Early reflections on PROLINNOVA's approach to building MSPs was presented at a workshop organised in October 2001 by GFAR and IFAD on Methodologies, Organisation and Management of Global Partnership Programmes (Waters-Bayer *et al* 2001).

In March 2004, the three CPs shared their MSP experiences at the first PROLINNOVA International Partners Workshop (IPW), held in Yirgalem, Ethiopia. These were complemented by case studies from other partnerships, a conceptual input about MSPs based on a literature review and an analysis of the international partnership. The insights were compiled in the proceedings (PROFIEET/PROLINNOVA 2004) and shared in three publications (Waters-Bayer *et al* 2004a, 2004b; Waters-Bayer *et al* 2005a).

In a next round of internal analysis, PROLINNOVA partners put many topics related to MSPs on the agenda of the second IPW in Uganda in 2005 – and such topics were discussed in some form, either in the main programme or in open space sessions, in all subsequent IPWs.

Further analysis of the MSP experiences was made for a keynote paper on how civil society fosters partnerships to promote innovation (Waters-Bayer & Bayer 2005), presented at the European Forum for Agricultural Research and Development (EFARD) conference in Switzerland, alongside country-specific poster presentations from the CPs in Nepal and South Africa. The latter experience in farmer-led research and extension was later presented in South Africa (Salomon & Letty 2006). Another paper presented in October 2005 at the Deutscher Tropentag reviewed lessons from MSPs up to that point in time and included updates from most CPs (Waters-Bayer *et al* 2005b).

The PROLINNOVA MSPs were then analysed as part of an external review of the GFAR's GPPs at the end of 2005 (Gonsalves & Niangado 2006). One member of this review team was asked to take a critical look at the findings of PROLINNOVA's internal review (Gonsalves 2006); he recommended that the partnership-building experiences be better packaged and made more widely known. The joint work on the booklet *Facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships* (Critchley *et al* 2006) stimulated people from several CPs as well as the International Support Team to document the experiences over the previous years, to learn further during the third IPW in Cambodia in early 2006 and to draw lessons for existing and new PROLINNOVA MSPs.

While preparing this booklet and afterwards at IPWs each year, the PROLINNOVA partners often debated how the national MSPs were functioning, referring to the key principles and lessons formulated in 2006 (see Box 1) as a basis for discussion. Further lessons from the interaction of the different stakeholders at country and international level were compiled in a contribution to the “Beyond Farmer First” workshop in December 2007 (Waters-Bayer *et al* 2009). Partners from two CPs (Ethiopia and Mali) presented their own experiences at this workshop (Amanuel 2009, Kanouté 2009) and a member of the PROLINNOVA Oversight Group presented more general lessons on partnerships for action research, based on experiences of PROLINNOVA partners and others (Killough 2009).

Box 1: Key principles and lessons for effective MSPs in PROLINNOVA

- Making partnership part of the MSP agenda and a goal in itself
- Starting with looking into what is already there
- Choosing partners carefully and strategically
- Sharing ownership
- Developing partners’ commitment through successful first actions
- Creating a culture of equality
- Careful matching of partners’ own interests with the common agenda
- Taking an “open nucleus” approach: grow gradually
- Striving for openness and transparency
- Readiness of members to break down barriers of competition and territoriality between them
- Clearly defining roles: specialist input, backstopping and facilitation
- Maximising use of partners’ abilities for cost effectiveness
- Learning how to collaborate as partners by reflecting on experiences
- Documenting experiences of the MSP
- Ensuring effective communication at all levels
- Joint planning, monitoring and evaluation
- Operationalising principles in clear and democratic governance

At the annual IPWs, some CP facilitators reported difficulties in maintaining longer-term commitment within the partnership. With funding from a Dutch capacity-building organisation PSO (*Personele Samenwerking in Ontwikkelingslanden*, Personnel Cooperation in Developing Countries), a brief study of the MSP experience of one CP (in Nepal) was made in 2010 as part of PSO’s action-research project “Healthy Networks” (www.toolsfornetworkers.nl/?p=517). This research was aimed at understanding the dynamics of networks and developing strategies to strengthen them. The study of the Nepal CP revealed the important learning effect of jointly assessing the national-level partnership (Faber & Wielinga 2011). This led to the next exercise of this kind: the East Africa partnership study.

2.2 East Africa partnership study

To be able to use joint assessment of the partnership as a tool for social learning and strengthening of the MSPs, the PROLINNOVA network gained PSO funding support to study how the CPs had evolved in three East African countries – Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda – that had expressed interest in this exercise. The East Africa study had three main objectives:

1. To gain understanding of the bottlenecks to partnership being experienced;
2. To introduce new energy levels and measures for strengthening the partnership;
3. To provide a source of learning for the larger PROLINNOVA network and beyond.

The study was coordinated by Joseph Ssuuna, a Uganda-based consultant who had also been involved in the earlier and larger Healthy Networks study. At the start of the study of PROLINNOVA CPs in East Africa, he formulated – based on his initial review of documents – three specific sets of questions to help guide the study:

1. Are members' interest in and *ownership* of the country network dwindling? If so, why?
2. Were the *coordination mechanisms* chosen effective enough to satisfy the varied interests? If not, what were shortcomings?
3. Have contestations over *resource allocation* affected performance of the partnerships? If so, in what way?

The study was conducted over a little more than a year (March 2011 to April 2012); most of the research in the three countries took place in April–November 2011. Local researchers who were not part of the CPs were hired to undertake the study in each country. They reviewed documents from the CPs, facilitated self-administered surveys of CP partners and conducted face-to-face interviews with the partners and with CP Secretariat members. In each country, the local researcher shared initial findings in an interactive workshop involving all key partners in the CP, who together agreed on the way forward. Staff members in the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat coordinated the study, provided methodological support and attended the country-level workshops.

After the local researchers completed their country-specific reports, the study coordinator made a synthesis of the findings and drew out lessons learnt across the three countries. These lessons were reviewed during the PROLINNOVA IPW in March 2012 in Mali, and the feedback was incorporated into the final report (Ssuuna *et al* 2012).

2.3 Stocktaking and analysis since then (2012–14)

Developments within the three East African MSPs were documented and analysed in the last couple of years within the CPs themselves (partly reflected in minutes of their meetings and in their annual reports), during backstopping visits by members of the PROLINNOVA International Support Team, and during the IPWs in 2013 in Kenya and 2014 in Cambodia. The PROLINNOVA network partners began a more intensive process of “stocktaking” in late 2013, in preparation for celebrating the tenth anniversary of the first IPW held in Ethiopia in 2004. The PROLINNOVA International Support Team drew up a framework for reflection by the CP members and assisted in the stocktaking process through communication by e-mail, Skype and – in the case of Kenya and Uganda – face-to-face with the CP coordinators and partners during backstopping visits. This allowed analysis of how the MSPs had evolved since completion of the East Africa partnership study. The process through which the CPs validated the updated case descriptions included in this report, which are meant to provide examples of the settings in which the PROLINNOVA MSPs operate, also stimulated reflection and self-assessment.

Thus, the analysis and conclusions in this paper are based on more or less continuous documentation of and reflection on building MSPs since 1999, underpinned by the authors' experience over more than 15 years in facilitating this process under the PROLINNOVA umbrella.

3. Three case studies of MSPs in East Africa to promote local innovation

Each of the MSP processes in the three countries had its unique dynamics because of historical, socio-political and institutional factors, as well as the individual personalities involved. The following case studies are compiled from the findings of the various above-mentioned studies and reflection processes, as well as recent updating from the three CPs.

3.1 PROLINNOVA–Kenya

Starting up

PROLINNOVA–Kenya was initiated when several Kenyans from universities, research institutions and NGOs concerned with ARD met at the Innovation Africa Symposium in Uganda in November 2006. In January 2007, they invited about 25 people from different state and non-state ARD organisations to a meeting in Nairobi. This meeting was convened by an NGO network, Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM)–Kenya, and facilitated by the PROLINNOVA–Uganda CP coordinator, who already had two years’ experience within the PROLINNOVA network and was invited by the Kenyans to assist them. The participants created a taskforce to set up a PROLINNOVA–Kenya (PK) network and asked the NGO Sustainable Agriculture Centre for Research, Extension and Development in Africa (SACRED)–Africa to host the national secretariat initially. The taskforce members came from PELUM–Kenya, SACRED–Africa, Sustainable Agriculture Community Development Programmes (SACDEP)–Kenya, World Neighbors (WN), Resources Oriented Development Initiatives (RODI)–Kenya, ETC East Africa, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) and KARI (Kenya Agricultural Research Institute), now KALRO (Kenya Agricultural & Livestock Research Organization).

SACRED–Africa made available a staff member as coordinator, who organised the first national PROLINNOVA workshop in Thika in July 2007, with a small amount of seed money from the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat. This workshop attracted over 50 people from various organisations in Kenya; about 40 of them expressed interest to join the network. The workshop generated much enthusiasm and led to the formulation of a PK action plan. To contribute to this, the International Secretariat provided another small grant for training in PID as an approach to stimulate and support farmer-led experimentation and innovation processes.

Expansion

PK welcomed the invitation from the International Secretariat to join the second phase of piloting an new mechanism to encourage farmer-led innovation: the “Local Innovation Support Fund” (LISF), funded by the Netherlands Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS) and the Rockefeller Foundation. This made it possible for PK to expand its resource base and to involve several partner organisations in concrete activities on the ground and in national learning events about these activities. PK chose to pilot the LISF in four districts in West and Eastern Kenya (two districts in each region), where field-based NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) in these districts could work together with members of the MSP. However, efforts to attract donor support for the other activities in PK’s action plan were initially slow in yielding results. Up to 2010, the LISF piloting and its related activities in capacity strengthening, joint learning and networking remained the main anchor of work for PK. The fact that KARI took on the responsibility of

coordinating the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities meant that the formal researchers took the network's activities more seriously than if only NGOs had been involved.

Complications in the relationship of the taskforce and coordinator with the host NGO prompted the taskforce to move the PK Secretariat for two years (2008–10) to a new NGO member of the CP – KENDAT (Kenya Network for Dissemination of Agricultural Technologies) – while initially retaining the same volunteer coordinator. The enthusiasm of many organisations that had attended the 2007 workshop began to wane, as the volunteer coordinator – who had another full-time job – could give little time to individual follow-up and sharing information with so many organisations. When she decided to hand over to a new PK coordinator within KENDAT, this NGO retained overall coordination of the network while another NGO member of PK, World Neighbors (WN), took on the responsibility of coordinating the LISF piloting. WN focused on the piloting in Western Region, while KENDAT handled this in Eastern Region.

PK began to gain more recognition from the public sector especially for its work with LISFs. The information shared about the network led to the inclusion of PK, through the taskforce member from KARI, in the EU-funded JOLISAA project (Joint Learning in Innovation Systems in African Agriculture) coordinated by Cirad (French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development). This project ran from 2010 to mid-2013, parallel to the LISF activities, under the umbrella of PROLINNOVA.

At the end of 2010, the National Steering Committee (NSC), as the PK taskforce had renamed itself, decided that it would be more efficient to give not only the task of M&E but the entire coordination of PK activity coordination to KARI, while the financial management was transferred to WN. The JOLISAA funds allowed KARI to hire a full-time assistant coordinator for the JOLISAA project in 2011, who also served as a coordinator of PK, to replace the KARI scientist who had held the (voluntary) position until then. The new coordinator started just as the East Africa partnership study was being carried out. The network gained momentum both through the interviews and workshop for the study (see below) and though the fact that the new (paid) coordinator had time to make contacts with several new potential partner organisations and potential donors. Setting up the PK Secretariat office at KARI Headquarters helped to make the network better known among the other researchers there.

Also visitors from outside the country gave encouragement to the PK network. In late 2010, the PROLINNOVA Oversight Group (POG) held a meeting in Kenya and visited farmer innovators and experimenters in Machakos, one of the districts where the LISF was being piloted. A field visit in 2011 by an evaluation team from Rockefeller Foundation, including video coverage, and another field visit in 2012 by the Pop Tech Nairobi Lab initiative (supported by Rockefeller Foundation) confirmed for several PK members that the network's activities were important enough to attract attention also from foreigners. This raised the profile of the network in the eyes of its members and in the eyes of potential new members and partners, including funders.

Increased visibility in the formal ARD sector

From 2011 onwards, the higher visibility of PK in Kenya opened new doors and possibilities for further partnerships. The National Council of Science and Technology (NCST) asked farmer innovators from the LISF piloting areas to take part in its national exhibition. PK also took part in the Kenya Public Service Innovations in-service delivery week, and local journalists interviewed

one of the innovators. During KARI's biennial scientific conference in 2012, PK had a stand for farmer innovators at the conference fair. These events drew still more attention to PK.

With a small amount of funds coming via the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat, PK organised a two-day workshop on strengthening capacities in policy dialogue. This allowed PK to link with new organisations such as the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the Kenya Industrial Property Institute (KIPI). At the same time, the work in the LISF piloting areas led to the development of strong multistakeholder Local Steering Committees and community-minded farmer innovators, who started to organise local innovation fairs.

The PROLINNOVA–Kenya taskforce – later NSC – has remained the driver of the CP from the outset to the present day. The taskforce/NSC met at least six times a year on a voluntary basis, despite the busy schedules of its members. The fact that most of them are based in or near Nairobi facilitated this.

Rekindled interest in PK through the partnership study

The NSC recognised that, after the initial wide interest in being part of PK, only some of the partner organisations continued to be active. It was therefore keen to be involved in the PSO-supported East Africa partnership study. This was with a view to gaining a better understanding of what had happened in the MSP and also so that other organisations could be brought back on board and new ones attracted.

As part of the partnership study, a 2-day workshop held in Nairobi in November 2011 brought together about 20 people from ten partner organisations. The consultants who carried out the review presented their analysis of the current state of the partnership. Its recommendations for strengthening the PK partnership included: i) institutionalising the network though registering it as a legal entity so that it can accept funds as a network rather than through one of its members; ii) drawing up a constitution; iii) strengthening the PK Secretariat; iv) actively recruiting new members; v) engaging in joint learning; vi) carrying out a strategic planning exercise; and vii) giving more attention to mobilising resources for the network. The PK coordinator and the NSC felt that the review rekindled interest of some organisations that had initially been enthusiastic about PK but had lost contact because they had not been directly involved in any of the funded projects. After the workshop, the Africa office of IIRR asked if it could join PK; this was approved by the NSC.

As in the case of many other platforms in the country, much of the initial interest in joining was probably based on expectations of acquiring funds. PK continued to invite other organisations to join if they shared the PROLINNOVA vision and it managed to maintain a presence at national level, while many of its activities were carried out by members and groups at the district level. Yet the availability of funds for these activities was definitely a great incentive and allowed the MSP to realise its plans.

In early 2011, the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat had organised a workshop in the Netherlands involving various partners to develop a proposal on local innovation and PID in the face of climate change. Although PK did not take part in this workshop, the International Secretariat invited it to join three other East African CPs (in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda) in submitting an adapted version of the proposal (focused on Eastern Africa) to Rockefeller Foundation. This funding became available in late 2012, after the proposal had been revised upon

the request of Rockefeller Foundation to broaden attention to innovation in response to not only climate change but also various other kinds of change being experienced by farming communities. Nine PK partner organisations decided to come together to implement this project (CLIC–SR: Combining Local Innovative Capacity with Scientific Research). They chose to focus on two districts, one in which they had previously piloted the LISF (Machakos) plus a new district, in which some of the partner organisations already had work ongoing (Baringo). Baringo had also been a study site in the JOLISAA project.

Surge of interest through regional farmer innovation fair

At the PROLINNOVA IPW in 2012, PK had offered to host the 2013 IPW and the final international workshop co-organised by JOLISAA on Agricultural Innovation Systems in Africa (AISA), as back-to-back events. During preparatory discussions for these events, the idea emerged to hold a national farmer innovation fair such as one held by PROLINNOVA–Nepal in 2009. With encouragement from Nairobi-based staff of the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), PK agreed to make this into a regional fair covering four countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. All these events were included in the “Week on Agricultural Innovation in Africa” (WAIA, 25–31 May 2013), which was co-funded by CCAFS, JOLISAA and several other organisations. PK agreed to take on the responsibility for local coordination of the WAIA, including the IPW, the Eastern African Farmer Innovation Fair (EAFIF), the AISA workshop and several smaller one-day workshops. This gave PK the opportunity – in the period from late November 2012 to end of May 2013 – to bring several Kenyan organisations back on board and to attract some new organisations, such as the AgriProfocus (APF) and the Kenya Federation of Agricultural Producers (KENFAP). APF is a network in itself with “Agri-Hubs” in all four of the above-mentioned countries. It played a very strong role as partner of PK in facilitating the preparation and implementation of the EAFIF and helped make new contacts.

However, problems related to funding and communication about the WAIA led to another drop in interest of many organisations that had originally wanted to collaborate in organising it. PK strengthened its small (one-person) secretariat with several young volunteers, especially for organising the WAIA. Holding the EAFIF and the AISA workshop and several other parallel events all in one week was a huge achievement that would not have been possible without the voluntary hard work and dedication of a small number of key organisations and individuals within the MSP. Particularly the fair led to a strong increase in the visibility of PK, which was important for further fundraising to continue to realise the plans of the MSP.

Never-ending efforts to raise funds

Until 2013, the PK coordinator and NSC had made great efforts to access funds for PK’s action plans, making proposals to, e.g., AfricaAdapt, PAEPARD (Platform for African-European Partnership on Agricultural Research for Development), the Kenya–South Africa Joint Science & Technology Research Programme, the European Union and Rockefeller Foundation’s Innovation Challenges, but with little success. It was more successful in raising funds for activities around the WAIA, e.g. from the USAID-funded Kenya Feed the Future Innovation Engine (KFIE) and APF for documenting the innovations exhibited by Kenyan farmers at the EAFIF. KFIE continued funding some farmers to outscale their innovations through links with entrepreneurs. PK also acquired funds from Nuffic (Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education) to hold a training of PID facilitators in the latter half of 2013 – another activity that reinforced the MSP. In addition,

CCAFS agreed to support PK's work on social learning linked to CLIC–SR as part of the partnership between the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat and CCAFS in SOLLINKKA (Social Learning LINKing Knowledge with Action).

PK had an “advantage” for building national ownership of the MSP in that, from Day 1, it had no core funding from outside and was always aware that it had to generate its own funds if it wanted to realise its plans. The funds that could be generated, either by PK on its own or through the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat from, e.g., JOLISAA, Rockefeller Foundation or CCAFS, allowed the communication and networking functions of the platform to be continued, both within Kenya and in interaction with other PROLINNOVA CPs. The projects, training events and workshops supported by this funding provided opportunities for various member organisations to collaborate in the PK activities.

PK carried out a strategic planning exercise in late 2013, facilitated voluntarily by IIRR–Africa. However, this exercise led to some tensions between key partners, who had different perceptions of how a strategy should be drawn up. In the meantime, the NSC had been following up on one of the recommendations of the PSO partnership study by investigating possibilities of making PK a legal entity, rather than remaining an informal network. There was some hesitation in taking this step, as it would have unknown consequences for an MSP seeking to engage in joint action and policy influence in ARD rather than competing with each other for funding.

Forming a legal entity for the MSP

One of the Kenya-based overseas donors approached for the WAIA in 2013 had stated that it could fund PK only if it were a legal entity. This was the trigger for PK to engage the services of a public secretary to register PK as an organisation. The NSC was advised that registering PK as an NGO would be more complicated and time-consuming than registering it as a company. In late 2013, PK received a certificate as a company limited by guarantee, with three of the NSC members as the guarantors. The main change was that the NSC became a Management Board. PK network members became general members of the company. PK planned to use the registration as a formality to meet the requirements of donors looking for a legal structure, but has not yet managed to attract additional funding as a result of having created a legal entity. An assembly of all PK members had been planned to take place in 2014 to inform the network formally of the change and to elect new NSC (Management Board) members, but the assembly was not held.

The registration allows PK to continue to operate as a multistakeholder platform without changing its working modalities. The structure of PK, including the chairmanship, did not change until late 2013, when the first chair of the NSC handed over the position to a researcher from KARI (now KALRO). The moving of the PK office out of KARI to WN (but retaining joint coordination by KARI and WN) and the appointment of a new coordinator in 2014 were not related to the registration of PK. The NSC (Management Board) recognised the need for a better flow of information to the membership (updating the e-group, circulating a newsletter, encouraging the sharing of information, not only one-way but also coming from PK members about PROLINNOVA-related work they are doing) but no changes in this respect have taken place. There is still a need to set up clear membership structures and to elect a new Membership Board.

Conclusions and outlook

The MSP in Kenya remains quite active because several members realise the advantages of different partners working together toward common objectives and have made efforts to generate resources for this, rather than depending primarily on the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat to acquire funds for them. The strong and relatively steady NSC has been committed to the MSP from the outset and taken firm steps in guiding it and ensuring good coordination.

Joint coordination by an NGO and a research organisation opened the doors for linkages in both the state and non-state sector and gave the network fairly wide recognition within the country. Hiring a paid coordinator (part-time linked to a related project) meant that more attention could be given to expanding the MSP and facilitating communication and collaboration between the partners. Especially the cooperation with several other organisations in holding a major series of events during the WAIA led to greater awareness of local innovation among many national and international ARD organisations based in Nairobi. Attending the international AISA workshop greatly raised the profile of PK. This put the CP in a good position to maintain existing partners and to attract new ones, including donors, but the simultaneous changes in PK coordinator, NSC chair and hosting of the PK office constrained the capacity of PK to take advantage of this position in the months that followed.

The activities of the MSP at national level have led to several interesting spinoffs. The Local Steering Committees in the areas where the LISF was piloted are likewise composed of multiple stakeholders. These district-level platforms have developed their own dynamics, such as holding local innovation fairs, participating in other fairs organised by other organisations, bringing in local innovations and engaging in joint experimentation in other projects, and responding to invitations to diverse local-level events related to agriculture and rural development. LSC members have been invited to become members of district and subdistrict development committees, and more attention is being paid to local innovation initiatives. Moreover, at the EAFIF, the group of farmer innovators from Kenya formed their own national farmer innovators network, which organised two farmer innovator fairs in Machakos and Nyando later in 2013. This national network initially operated informally but, in 2015, the leading members developed a constitution and are now trying to register the Farmer-Led Innovators Association of Kenya (FALIA-K). PK at national level is seeking to leverage on these initiatives of farmer innovators at national and country level to enhance local fundraising efforts through sources such as the Constituency Development Funds (CDFs), county agricultural plan financing, county-level private sector alliances and others.

3.2 PROLINNOVA–Tanzania

Starting up

The preparations for PROLINNOVA–Tanzania started in 2004, when a member of PELUM–Tanzania was inspired by news he had heard about the international PROLINNOVA network and wrote a proposal for a PROLINNOVA–Tanzania network. He submitted the proposal to the German donor organisation EED (*Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst*, Church Development Service) and the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat at ETC Foundation. Both EED and DGIS (through ETC) agreed to support the PROLINNOVA–Tanzania network, and the PELUM–Tanzania secretariat became its host. The activities of PELUM–Tanzania in building and coordinating a PROLINNOVA MSP were in line with PELUM's own strategy to engage with other ARD stakeholder beyond its own members.

In January 2005, PROLINNOVA–Tanzania hired a full-time coordinator and formed a small team made up of staff from PELUM–Tanzania, the NGO INADES² Formation–Tanzania and Sokoine University of Agriculture to support him. A national inception workshop introduced the PROLINNOVA concepts to a wide range of potentially interested organisations involved in agricultural research, extension and education. The participants agreed on the need for and the goal of engaging in an MSP to promote farmer-led innovation processes. During a second workshop later in 2005 attended by 12 of the organisations from the initial workshop, an action plan was developed for PROLINNOVA–Tanzania based on analysis of the situation of agricultural research and extension in the country at that time. The participants agreed on roles and responsibilities and set up an NSC with representatives of all key stakeholders: leaders of the above-mentioned organisations plus MVIWATA (the national farmer network), the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives (MoA) and the Cooperative College Moshi (CCM). Ultimately, PROLINNOVA–Tanzania is governed by the PELUM–Tanzania Board of Directors as the highest decision-making organ. The role of the NSC is to oversee the process of programme implementation and to provide guidance and advice to the PELUM–Tanzania Board for further decisions (PELUM–Tanzania 2011).

Expansion

In 2006 and 2007, PROLINNOVA–Tanzania’s strong resource base, especially from EED, allowed it to implement a wide set of activities to promote local innovation and PID in the country. These included studies and documentation of farmer innovators and local innovations, mostly by PELUM member organisations, leading to various forms of publication. Another major set of activities involved capacity strengthening, including workshops on policy analysis and advocacy, farmer-extension-research linkages, PID and documentation skills. These activities led to an increase in membership from 12 organisations in 2005 to 22 organisations by the end of 2007, drawing from central and local government institutions, academia, farmer organisations, research and training institutes, and NGOs.

From 2008 to 2011, PROLINNOVA–Tanzania took part in the action research on LISF, co-funded by Rockefeller Foundation and DGIS, as one of eight CPs involved in this initiative coordinated by the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat. The work in Tanzania focused in Dodoma Region of the Central Zone and in Mbeya Region in the Southern Highlands Zone. Until this time, the PROLINNOVA–Tanzania had been centrally managed by PELUM–Tanzania as the national secretariat but, for the LISF piloting, implementation was decentralised to member organisations in the two regions, with PELUM-Tanzania providing training and coaching on a continuous basis. In each of the two regions, a platform of NGOs, farmers and research organisations formed to engage in the action research.

At zonal and national level, numerous different actors are involved – people from local farming communities, NGOs, farmer organisations, local government authorities, academia and departments of research, training and extension from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives as well as the Ministry of Livestock Development and Fisheries. Field activities with farmers in the two regions are coordinated by multidisciplinary teams. Co-implementers were selected based on their commitment, interest and capacities to carry out the activities.

² INADES: *Institut Africain pour le Développement Economique et Social*, African Institute for Economic and Social Development

Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were signed between PELUM–Tanzania and co-implementing partners to ensure accountability.

All these activities led to increased visibility of PROLINNOVA–Tanzania and created opportunities for policy dialogue and mainstreaming of PID. The PROLINNOVA CP coordinator at PELUM–Tanzania was increasingly asked to train staff of other agencies in PID. PELUM–Tanzania and other member organisations of the CP were also included in the MoA pool of trainers that built the capacity of researchers nationwide in people-centred innovation system approaches. PROLINNOVA–Tanzania members were active in various committees at regional level in reviewing research proposals under the MoA’s competitive research calls. The CP also used the hosting of the PROLINNOVA IPW in 2011 in a strategic way to influence national policy by involving the Minister of Agriculture in the opening session. Immediately after the event, the Minister asked PROLINNOVA–Tanzania for a list of farmer innovations and suggestions how to support them.

EED, the main donor, commissioned an external evaluation of PROLINNOVA–Tanzania activities in 2005–07. The positive outcome of the evaluation led to funding for another three years (2008–10), though at a slightly lower level. In 2011, EED agreed to fund PELUM–Tanzania for yet another three years, but PROLINNOVA activities formed only a relatively small part of the programme for 2011–13. EED wanted to fund work oriented more toward field level rather than engagement in a platform of different stakeholders to influence policy at national level.

During the years 2005–11, the NSC met at least twice a year. PROLINNOVA–Tanzania also organised regular workshops of partner organisations to exchange experiences, review progress, strategise and plan. The position, roles and responsibilities of the PROLINNOVA–Tanzania NSC as compared to those of the Board of PELUM itself was a contentious issue throughout, partly because the PROLINNOVA programme (including the activities funding by DGIS and those funded by EED) was by far the largest within the PELUM network. Towards the end of the final phase of funding coming from DGIS through the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat (2011), change of staff in PELUM–Tanzania and uncertainty about the future of EED funding led to a slowing down in the momentum of the MSP.

Partnership study during time of uncertain funding

In 2011, PROLINNOVA–Tanzania joined the East Africa partnership study funded by PSO in order to gain insight into the appropriateness of the multistakeholder approach as a basis for institutionalising participatory research and extension approaches, and to evaluate the functioning of the national MSP in providing entry points for integrating PID into the regular work of the partner organisations. The study concluded with a three-day partners’ workshop in June 2011 with participants from most of the key partner organisations to review the findings on how the MSP was functioning. The workshop report addresses many diverse issues, but the recommendations zoom in on only a few, including the need for: i) each member organisation to appoint a contact person for PROLINNOVA activities; ii) MoUs to create commitment and ensure proper use of funds for the planned activities; iii) harmonisation of workplans of the partner organisations with the joint PROLINNOVA–Tanzania plan; iv) preparing an annual calendar of activities through the annual planning workshop; v) an improved communication strategy; and vi) a resource-mobilisation and fundraising strategy.

These recommendations were made at a time when the Dutch funding for PROLINNOVA–Tanzania had just come to an end and the EED funding through PELUM–Tanzania, the CP host, had been reduced. PELUM–Tanzania therefore could not keep the staff experienced in facilitating the national MSP.

As a result, the NSC stopped meeting and the CP has not sent an update of activities for the annual international PROLINNOVA reports since 2012. PELUM–Tanzania continued a few national coordination and communication tasks related to PROLINNOVA, such as finalising the reports on the LISF piloting and the East African partnership study. PELUM–Tanzania summarised the learning on MSPs in a publication *Strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships: experiences from PROLINNOVA–Tanzania* (2011), listing the achievements as shown in Box 2.

Box 2: Achievements of PROLINNOVA–Tanzania multistakeholder process

After six years (2005–10) of PROLINNOVA implementation, the following changes have been realised as result of the multistakeholder process in Tanzania:

- Farmer innovators involved in the programme have developed mechanisms for self-help to support each other through facilitating members to accessing small loans to undertake social and economic activities.
- Due to the potential of the approach used in PROLINNOVA, the membership of PROLINNOVA–Tanzania increased from 12 NGOs in 2005 to 22 partners from the public and private sector in 2010.
- The programme managed to influence the integration of PID into ongoing government programmes to mainstream the Agricultural Innovation System (AIS) concepts into national agricultural research and development programmes in which PROLINNOVA partners are playing an important role to enhance successful implementation of existing national laws and policies to support PID and its institutionalisation into AR&D. PID and AIS constitute the first block among four that constitute the national training programme for researchers and development practitioners on participatory approaches commonly known as Client Oriented Research and Development Management Approach (CORDEMA). PELUM–Tanzania was involved in the design of the CORDEMA training manual.
- Apart from being a member of the National Team of Trainers on CORDEMA, PROLINNOVA–Tanzania is a member of the Zonal Technical Committee (ZaTC) and the Zonal M&E team responsible for the Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Funds (ZARDEF) in the Central Zone. Some staff members from PROLINNOVA partner organisations are currently members of Zonal Technical Committees (ZaTCs) and Zonal Steering Committees (ZSCs) for ASDP and ZARDEF in various agro-ecological zones of Tanzania.
- Some partners such as NGOs, local government authorities (LGAs) and research institutions are allocating funds to finance PROLINNOVA-related activities to pilot Local Innovation Support Funds.

Source: PELUM–Tanzania (2011).

In 2011, despite uncertainty in the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat because of the relatively weak performance of the CP in Tanzania and after several discussions between the Secretariat and the CP to explore room for improvement, PROLINNOVA–Tanzania was included along with three other East African CPs in a proposal to Rockefeller Foundation on local innovation, PID and climate change adaptation: Combining Local Innovative Capacity with Scientific Research (CLIC–SR). When this funding became available by the end of 2012, after the proposal had been revised to broaden attention to innovation in response to also other kinds of change experienced by farming communities, PELUM–Tanzania and INADES–Tanzania came together with local MoA and research centre staff to implement this project. They chose to focus on Dodoma in central Tanzania.

Although the framework of this CLIC–SR project explicitly created room to maintain the wider PROLINNOVA–Tanzania stakeholder collaboration at national level, this was not given serious attention. After 2011, the PROLINNOVA–Tanzania partner organisations did not manage to raise further funds on their own for CP activities other than CLIC–SR.

Conclusions and outlook

The PROLINNOVA–Tanzania partnership led to a increased recognition of the PID approach and its use within regular programmes of some of the organisations involved in the CP, such as some members of the PELUM network and (parts of) research stations directly involved. It also managed to bring the main concepts of the approach into the MoA programme Client Oriented Research and Development Management Approach (CORDEMA).

PELUM–Tanzania set up the PROLINNOVA MSP at national level with the aim of strengthening local-level MSPs engaged in exchange, reflection and learning so that smallholders could become more involved in planning and implementing research and development projects to improve rural livelihoods. In its 2011 publication, it states that the MSP not only created a conducive environment for implementing the programme activities but also led to institutionalisation of PID concepts and approaches into ARD institutions in Tanzania. However, there is as yet little evidence as to whether the multistakeholder collaboration and learning processes are continuing at regional and zonal level in the areas where PROLINNOVA–Tanzania has been operating.

The PROLINNOVA–Tanzania partnership, as it functioned between 2006 and 2011, was not able to move beyond the specific externally funded projects. A deeper analysis of the role of the host organisation of PROLINNOVA–Tanzania in the MSP and its relations to other partners in the MSP would be needed to understand why, after so many years, it did not prove possible to build up a network of champions in different organisations to collaborate in continued efforts to scale up the approach.

3.3 PROLINNOVA–Uganda

Starting up

PROLINNOVA–Uganda’s beginnings can be traced back to 2003, when a first national workshop, attended by people from 34 organisations involved in agriculture and NRM, concluded a consultative process on the situation of ARD in Uganda and what needed to be done to strengthen participatory approaches to it. Environment Alert had taken the initiative and was chosen by the workshop participants to coordinate PROLINNOVA activities in the country. A core team made up of people from six organisations³ was formed to hold this workshop. The core team set up an NSC⁴ to help build up PROLINNOVA–Uganda as a learning platform and to provide governance.

This was part of an “inception phase” that the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) agreed to support for one year. With the seed funds from IFAD and making clever use of the

³ Environmental Alert; Africa 2000 Network; Kulika Charitable Trust; Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF); Community Development Resource Network; National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO); African Highlands Initiative (AHI)

⁴ Comprising NARO, CIAT (International Centre for Tropical Agriculture), National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), Makerere University Faculty of Forestry and Nature Conservation, Uganda National Council of Science and Technology, Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Organisation, and the Uganda National Farmers Federation.

involved organisations' own resources, the MSP in Uganda implemented its plan of action that included studies and documentation of local innovation, encouragement of joint experimentation using the PID approach, related capacity strengthening, networking and policy dialogue. Farmer-to-farmer exchange and learning visits and showcasing of farmer innovation at local, regional or national exhibitions were important components of its action plan. In 2010, the network organised its own farmer innovation exhibition in Entebbe.

PROLINNOVA's visibility was enhanced through its involvement in the Annual General Assembly and science exhibition of the Forum on Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) in Entebbe in 2005. Shortly after the FARA assembly, PROLINNOVA-Uganda reached an agreement with the Faculty of Forestry and Nature Conservation at Makerere University to offer regular topical presentations on local innovation and PID. In 2009, it expanded this line of work by organising dialogue meetings with universities on mainstreaming PID into the curriculum. Training in policy dialogue, lobbying and advocacy was organised to support this and other policy-related work.

Diversification of funding and partners

From 2006 onwards, PROLINNOVA-Uganda managed to diversify its funding base on its own as well as through the International Secretariat. In 2006, PROLINNOVA joined forces with CIAT to co-organise the Innovation Africa Symposium (IAS) in Kampala; PROLINNOVA-Uganda hosted the event and arranged excursions by IAS participants to farmer innovators. Also in that year, it became a partner in the action research to pilot LISFs, co-funded by Rockefeller Foundation and DGIS. In 2007, it collaborated with the Kampala City Council, the International Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and later the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) to study farmer innovation in urban settings and to undertake PID activities focused on urban waste management. It also worked with the Uganda National Association for the Blind to document innovations in agriculture and NRM by the blind.

Thus, already by 2006, PROLINNOVA-Uganda was a robust, active MSP. The Director of Environmental Alert played a very important role in this: he had a vision for the network, considerable influence in the development sector in Uganda and good links with different types of stakeholder organisations and individuals. The strength of the CP and its secretariat at the time is evident, among other things, from the responsibilities it received to organise activities for the international network such as the international PID Training of Facilitators workshop and the international farmer-led documentation workshop with PELUM-Uganda, both in 2006.

In the period 2003–10, the NSC usually met at least twice a year while the core team met more often as demanded by the tasks at hand. About once a year, PROLINNOVA-Uganda organised workshops involving the larger network for sharing and learning about farmer-led innovation and development.

Partnership study at time of weakening coordination

By 2011, most of the funded projects had come to end (including the DGIS funding for PROLINNOVA) and had not led to follow-up phases or new projects. The funds for finalising the action research on LISF piloting constituted the only remaining external source for the CP and its secretariat in Uganda. Complications within the coordinating NGO and the resignation of the staff member who had been coordinating the CP led to further uncertainties within PROLINNOVA-Uganda. It is in this

context that the CP agreed to become involved in the partnership study supported by PSO as a way to review its position and find ways to strengthen the MSP in the new situation.

A two-day workshop reviewing the functioning of the Ugandan partnership concluded the PSO study in Uganda. In August 2011, at a workshop of 25 participants from all key partner organisations, the researchers who had carried out the study presented a fairly critical analysis of the current state of the MSP but, at the same time, had gained confirmation of the commitment and interest of many partners to continue. The recommendations made – to be followed up by the PROLINNOVA–Uganda Secretariat – included: i) to harmonise MoUs to confirm the partnerships and not just for specific activities as had been done thus far; ii) to strengthen the secretariat and its resource base; iii) to increase collaboration and partnership at lower levels; and iv) to strengthen documentation and communication.

In 2011, the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat at ETC Foundation in the Netherlands included PROLINNOVA–Uganda, along with three other East African CPs, in the CLIC–SR proposal to Rockefeller Foundation on local innovation, PID and climate change adaptation. When this funding became available by the end of 2012, after the proposal had been revised to broaden attention to innovation in response to also other kinds of change experienced by farming communities, 11 PROLINNOVA–Uganda partner organisations came together to implement this project. They chose to focus on Nakasongola District (with the work coordinated by the NGO Kulika Charitable Trust) and Moyo District (with the work coordinated by Environmental Alert). The framework of this project specifically created room to involve the wider PROLINNOVA–Uganda platform but the coordinating organisation very seldom organised such meetings.

In the period 2011–13, Environmental Alert – the host of PROLINNOVA–Uganda – went through some major changes, including appointment of a new director and reduction in staff. Policy changes in European countries like the Netherlands meant that some of the NGO’s principal donors could not continue providing their support. In this situation, Environmental Alert just managed to handle the funded PROLINNOVA work but lacked the capacity to give serious attention to facilitating the wider national-level partnership and to follow up systematically all the recommendations from the 2011 workshop. It continued to link PROLINNOVA–Uganda with the global network and contributed at that level without always sharing relevant insights and developments within the MSP in Uganda.

The NSC and core team meetings became less frequent, but the two NGOs Environmental Alert and Kulika Charitable Trust continued through this period to find researchers prepared to collaborate with farmer innovators in PID. These researchers came from Mukono Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Institute of the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) and the Makerere University Faculty of Food Science and Nutrition. The CP also organised exhibits by farmer innovators during district and national-level events.

In 2012, Environmental Alert involved ten partner organisations in the exercise of developing scenarios for scaling up LISFs, taking into consideration the lessons learnt and challenges faced in piloting these funding mechanisms at the two sites. It reported that the involvement in piloting the LISF and developing scenarios for scaling it up strengthened the partnership between the organisations and led to closer contacts with the Uganda National Farmers Federation (UNFFE) to explore the possibility that it continue coordination of the LISFs with its MSP dynamics. Although

this was agreed in principle, it still needs to be put into effect through further joint policy lobbying and fundraising efforts for the LISF.

Especially the community-based organisation in Nakasongola District – the Kikandwa Environmental Association (KEA), a long-standing member of PROLINNOVA–Uganda – became increasingly active at the local level in organising exhibits and celebrations of farmer innovation, involving not only farmers but also local politicians and other community members.

PROLINNOVA–Uganda, through its coordinating NGO Environmental Alert, made some efforts to mobilise funds to continue the CP and its activities. It submitted several concept notes to donors, but without success until 2013, when it acquired funding from Nuffic for intensive training of partner staff in PID. This took place in 2014. It had been one of the priorities identified during the 2011 workshop at the end of the partnership study.

Conclusions and outlook

The PROLINNOVA–Uganda MSP continues to function but at a very low level, despite the fact that funding is still available that explicitly allows attention to be given to maintaining and strengthening the MSPs within the network. Difficulties of the coordinating NGO to maintain its own operations with reduced overall funding and the lack of a strong NSC to provide guidance and direction have rendered the Uganda MSP relatively weak and still quite dependent on funding coming through the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat. The partners in the field implementing the CLIC–SR work remain active and committed, but the host organisation has remained largely inactive. Another constellation for organising the platform in Uganda needs to be found, so that the existing interest in joining forces to promote innovation by rural communities and to influence agricultural research and development can be tapped.

4. Findings from analysis of the national-level MSPs in East Africa

4.1 Achievements and lessons

The discussion below highlights the major areas of success in the PROLINNOVA MSPs as drawn from the reviews, from communication with the CP coordinators and partners, and from our own observations.

Creating effective platforms for networking

The PROLINNOVA MSPs have created platforms for networking within the countries and, through this, within the international PROLINNOVA network. Partner organisations were exposed to a new approach to ARD through their links with the PROLINNOVA International Support Group as well as to PROLINNOVA CPs in other parts of the world. Within each country, stronger collaboration between diverse organisations has emerged, including among NGOs that had hitherto been working largely on their own. For example, CBOs and NGOs have entered new partnerships with research organisations such as NARO in Uganda and government agencies such as the MoA in Kenya and Tanzania, also in activities that go beyond PID or PROLINNOVA itself.

Strengthening capacities of partner organisations

The PROLINNOVA MSPs at national level provided platforms for partners to gain a better understanding of the value of action learning, reflection and joint analysis of processes. The international network brought together members of these national platforms in a variety of training and other capacity-strengthening events, such as on PID facilitation, policy advocacy, LISF management, climate change adaptation (including proposal writing), farmer-led documentation, and writeshops on PID and gender. These events helped build up expertise at different levels to promote farmer-led participatory innovation. Although the annual IPWs and the various international training events could be attended by only a limited number of people (generally, one or two from each country), the MSPs in each country provided a platform for sharing this learning more widely.

Integrating PID concepts and processes into partner organisations

The PROLINNOVA CPs sought to integrate participatory approaches to farmer-led innovation and experimentation into the work of the diverse partner organisations directly involved in the MSP. The engagement of the partners within the national network has varied greatly – ranging from simply sharing information to much more active involvement in specific activities such as studies of local innovation, capacity building on PID and related matters, farmer-led joint experimentation, LISF piloting, policy-influencing activities and documentation (farmer-led and otherwise).

All PROLINNOVA partner organisations are working in the domain of agriculture and NRM. Their ability to contribute time, resources, technical expertise, information and knowledge to the MSP depended on the attention to local innovation and PID in their regular programmes and the flexibility in the design of these programmes. Their involvement in the MSP gave them an opportunity to introduce or strengthen the PID approach in their organisations and their regular programmes, but not all partner organisations embraced this opportunity to the same extent.

Many partners in the three East African countries were involved in the action research on piloting LISFs and could thus learn about a novel way to fund farmer-managed research and development. However, there is little evidence of incorporation of LISF-type approaches into the regular work of these organisations after the piloting came to an end, despite the fact that the CPs had additional project support and time to develop upscaling scenarios and to engage in related policy dialogue.

Interviews and workshop discussions revealed that the involvement of staff members from the different partner organisations in MSP meetings (i.e. meetings of the core group, the NSC and the national PROLINNOVA network) helped them internalise the concepts and approaches of promoting local innovation and farmer-led joint research in their own understanding and within their organisations. No deeper-going study has yet been made to find out to what extent this actually occurred in the various partner organisations.

The wider objective of PROLINNOVA is to integrate PID into government policies and programmes. The involvement of government agencies as partners in the MSPs is an important strategy towards this end. PROLINNOVA–Tanzania was particularly successful in achieving active collaboration of the MoA in the MSP, which helped to mainstream an agricultural innovation system perspective into national ARD programmes. This CP also contributed substantially to the national training for researchers by developing and introducing modules on local innovation and PID.

In all three countries, the PROLINNOVA MSPs appear to have influenced approaches taken in the government research sector, more so at district or regional level than at national level; however, the extent to which the MSP processes and activities contributed to this change would need to be more deeply investigated. In any case, several government researchers showed keen interest to take part in the various training events and workshops, such as in the intensive PID training in Kenya in 2013. Changes can also be seen emerging from the active collaboration of some researchers with farmer innovators in the joint experimentation supported by the LISFs. In addition, the Week on Agricultural Innovation in Africa including the Eastern Africa Farmer Innovation Fair, organised in Nairobi by PROLINNOVA–Kenya together with the CPs in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda, attracted many researchers and decision-makers from Kenyan government institutions such as the MoA, KARI and the National Council for Science and Technology (NCST).

Importance of partners' collaboration on the ground

In all three countries, the MSP members were engaged in concrete activities at grassroots level with farmer innovators and their communities. This included action research on LISFs that channelled small grants directly to farmers for local experimentation and innovation. Being involved in setting up the LISF management committees and advising the PID supported through the LISF grants created close links between the CP partners at national and subnational level and the local farming communities. The LISF management committees were local-level MSPs that helped create links between farmers and support agencies, some of which continued to function after the end of LISF piloting. The activities around piloting the LISFs also helped strengthen the national MSPs and the members' understanding of and commitment to the PID approach. Also other studies, e.g. Swaans *et al* (2014), have revealed that multistakeholder platforms are more active or effective if they are involved in some joint activities on the ground, such as local-level experimentation, and if they have a clear mechanism for linking local-level activities to higher-level platforms.

In the PROLINNOVA MSPs, the joint support to on-the-ground activities, including their documentation and analysis, were important for joint learning. This was particularly successful in Kenya, where scientists in the national research organisation took on the task of coordinating the M&E, which made them intensely involved in learning about and helping other MSP members learn about the PID approach and its outcomes at local and higher levels.

Balancing commitment to the MSP with other work demands

Through the MSP approach, the many organisations and individuals that have linked up with PROLINNOVA since its inception have shown varying but, in some cases, very high levels of commitment. In these cases, their passion for the central principles and approaches of PROLINNOVA and their shared ambition for its agenda were the driving forces behind their continued involvement in the MSPs. The open and inclusive nature of the national-level MSPs allowed many to join the group if they expressed interest. However, the busy schedules of the partner organisations often constrained their involvement in specific activities. Taking part in the MSP meetings can be time consuming, especially in the case of Tanzania, where the partners are geographically dispersed. When new people from the existing member organisations joined the MSP meetings, e.g. to replace someone who had moved to another position or organisation, they usually received little orientation and therefore had less understanding of and commitment to the PROLINNOVA vision and activities. On the other hand, the growing recognition gained by PROLINNOVA partner organisations and innovative farmers through their involvement in national and international publications helped to stimulate their further commitment.

Closely related to this is the issue of hosting the PROLINNOVA network in each country. This could be regarded as a challenge but, in view of the commitment shown by the many hosting NGOs that took on this task, it deserves to be regarded as an achievement. In each country, one partner in the MSP hosts the secretariat, which facilitates the building up and continuation of the MSP, coordinates the activities and manages agreements and other administrative tasks (e.g. annual narrative and financial reporting) on behalf of the MSP. Upon accepting this responsibility, the host organisation commits human and financial resources that may be only partially budgeted; it is up to the core team of the national network to define how much is set aside for these tasks. The PROLINNOVA network at national and international level thus depends on the commitment of the host organisation for timely implementation and administration of the planned activities. Organisations that have activities related to promoting local innovation and farmer-led research and development in their strategic plans and budgets have found it easier to play this role.

4.2 Issues and challenges

The discussion below highlights some major issues and challenges in handling the national-level MSPs.

Handling diverse motivations and interests of partners

The PROLINNOVA CPs are composed of diverse stakeholders, which may include NGOs, government research and extension organisations, universities, development projects, farmer organisations, CBOs and private-sector organisations. They are all introduced to the partnership in the same fashion: they are provided with information about the vision and approach of the initiative and are welcomed to become part of it. It cannot be assumed that they all have the same expectations and motivations to join the PROLINNOVA network. For some organisations, being a network member

enhances their own organisational agenda; for others, it may be regarded as a means to obtain project funding. Such differences in expectations affect the way that the members perceive and respond to their roles in and obligations to the partnership. The common denominator in the MSPs has been the interest to recognise and promote local innovation and engage in PID through partnership, but the partners differ in terms of their capacity and interest to contribute to and benefit from different types of activities, such as capacity building, lobbying etc. Handling these diverse motivations and interests of the different partners is a balancing act that requires sensitivity and moderation skills.

MSP facilitation and coordination

Considerable skills and competencies are needed to manage and facilitate an MSP. Such skills are not always readily available in the host organisation or in the country, at least not at the relatively low levels of payments that a PROLINNOVA CP can allocate to such a person. To be sure, the capacity to facilitate an MSP should be a criterion for deciding on a host organisation and a CP coordinator, but the groups that initiated the network in each country perhaps underestimated the skills needed for this when they chose their hosts. Hence, those allocated the facilitating role for the MSP were not always adequately equipped for the task. Moreover, it is extremely important that one or more “champions” provide encouragement and support to the MSP process. When a strong director of a coordinating organisation leaves and, thus, a champion is lost, the process is weakened or slowed down. The functioning of the MSP thus often depends on the enthusiasm and commitment of the NSC and the leadership of the host organisations. Partly on account of resource constraints, the work in the CP secretariat usually rests on the shoulders of only one (often part-time) person who does not have daily face-to-face contact with the partners. An active working group of staff from the key partners, such as was operating in Uganda in the early years of the CP, provided great support to the CP coordinator. Mentoring in MSP facilitation is given some attention during the backstopping visits from the International Support Team, but when a CP coordinator is replaced, the capacities that had been built are lost and need to be rebuilt in the new person.

Lack of clarity regarding MSP membership

The PSO study of the partnerships in the three countries showed a lack of clarity as to who exactly are the members of the CP. It was often not clear who was in the larger community of practice and common interest and who was in the smaller circle (NSC, core group, working group). Active participation at both levels fluctuated considerably over the years, although a “hard core” of champions continued to drive the process. People or organisations were not asked to sign up formally as members in the larger or smaller circle. MoUs were used when funds flowed for specific activities. Initially, none of the three CPs sought to create a formal association. More recently, PROLINNOVA–Kenya registered itself as a formal entity, but this does not seem to have made any difference in how the MSP functioned. This lack of strict formalisation of the MSPs may be because they wanted to remain as open platforms for sharing and learning, which anyone could join at any time. It also seems to create space for organisations to become less active, or even disappear without much “noise” that could potentially jeopardise the continuing partnership of the other organisations.

Individual or organisation-based involvement in the MSP

Organisational commitment to the MSP has been low in cases when it was not clear whether invitations to join MSP meetings were on an individual or organisational basis. In many cases, the core group deliberately extended the invitations to individuals within potential partner organisations whom it regarded as open to and interested in the PROLINNOVA initiative, and hoped to influence the organisation in collaboration with these individuals. This was especially the case with government organisations of research, extension and education. However, this had the disadvantage that, if the individual member of the MSP left his or her organisation, the involvement of that organisation in the MSP was interrupted until a new “internal champion” could be found. It sometimes also meant that the individual was not able to fulfil commitments to the PROLINNOVA work because their organisation did not (yet) regard this as part of their regular work and was therefore not supportive.

Usually, only one member from each organisation was involved in the core team and NSC meetings, and the extent to which deliberate efforts were made to integrate the PID concepts and approaches into the member’s organisation depended very much on the individuals concerned. Leaders in the partner organisations had the potential to drive the PROLINNOVA agenda, influence decisions and integrate the approach more firmly within their organisations, but it was difficult to convene them, which sometimes led to delays or inaction in carrying out agreed activities. In cases where an organisation rather than an individual within it was invited to join the NSC, the organisation assigned a mid-level staff member as its representative, and this person tended to regard PROLINNOVA as one of their many projects within the organisation, instead of seeing their role in helping to bring about organisational change from within. The CPs have constantly struggled with this question as to whether it is more strategic to focus on individual or organisational membership in the MSP.

Heavy tasks versus limited resources

All three CPs set themselves high ambitions with regard to the institutional change in ARD that they sought to bring about. However, the funding of the PROLINNOVA CPs has been fairly limited over the years. PROLINNOVA–Tanzania had funding from EED from the onset, but the other two CPs in Ethiopia and Kenya relied more on funds received through the PROLINNOVA International Secretariat in the Netherlands, while partners contributed resources through investment of considerable own time. The amount of funds that could be generated for specific projects under the umbrella of PROLINNOVA was not sufficient to involve all partner organisations in the MSP in the funded activities. This created tensions between those who took on lead roles in implementation and those that could not become involved – or at least could not be paid to do so. Declining partner engagement in the MSPs was noticed among members that were not receiving funds through PROLINNOVA for any of their activities.

Staff members in the partner organisations who received funding through PROLINNOVA (including staff members of the agency hosting the CP) had to carry out the work alongside other tasks – often for better-funded projects. Those CP coordinators who were not being paid full-time for the PROLINNOVA work felt that it was difficult to manage the MSP and its highly demanding programme in addition to their other work. Conflicting work responsibilities and schedules sometimes caused

delays in decision-making and fund dispersal to the other partners in the MSP and reduced the partners' commitment to carry out the agreed tasks.

To formalise or not to formalise?

Until very recently, none of the PROLINNOVA MSPs was legally registered. They have operated in a fairly informal manner and have made pragmatic working arrangements as and when needed, such as letters of agreement or MoUs. Funds coming through the International Secretariat have been channelled through the host organisations in each country, which handles the funds on behalf of the CP. The PSO partnership study revealed that some members of the MSPs – especially in Kenya – thought that registration of the CP as a legal body would make it easier to mobilise funds, especially inside the country. Some donors are less inclined to channel their funds to an informal network, even if it is through a member organisation that is a legal body. PROLINNOVA has valued the “informality” of the network at all levels because of the flexibility and inclusiveness that this allows. Although some MSP members in all three countries thought that creating a more permanent secretariat would address some of the constraints they saw in the way the MSPs had been functioning thus far, only PROLINNOVA–Kenya actually took the step of creating a formal legal entity, and that does not seem to have made it easier to access funding. Some members think that creating a formally recognised structure would help in clarifying roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders and in defining rules and regulations. However, this issue could also be addressed by using MoUs more systematically.

Documenting own learning about MSP processes

Especially during IPWs but also on their own initiative at national level, the partners in each country had several opportunities to look back and learn how the MSP developed or could be improved. The M&E framework proposed by IIRR staff in the Philippines as part of the International Support Team included monitoring of the MSP process. IIRR developed together with the CP coordinators some M&E tools for the PROLINNOVA activities and for the MSPs and gave M&E training. PROLINNOVA–Tanzania held several workshops and meetings over the years in which the functioning of the partnership was reviewed. The NSC of PROLINNOVA–Kenya monitored programme activities and coordination frequently, and even changed the hosting organisation when it noticed that the MSP was functioning poorly. Unfortunately, this did not happen in the case of PROLINNOVA–Uganda in recent years. The IPW discussions were documented in the workshop reports and captured in some of the publications mentioned in the introduction to this paper. However, the MSPs were generally not strong in documenting the findings of their internal reviews of their own functioning. A notable exception was the paper on strengthening MSPs brought out by PROLINNOVA–Tanzania in 2011.

Documentation is important not only to capture and learn from the MSP processes but also to provide evidence for outsiders about the value of investing in MSP processes. Because good documentation was lacking, the coordinators of the PSO partnership study found it difficult to ascertain the impacts of the internal reviews by the MSPs in terms of improving their functioning. This may have been due not only to poor documentation but also to weak facilitation and leadership in systematic reflection, planning follow-up activities to improve the MSP and making sure that these plans were carried out.

5. Conclusions and possible ways forward

Although the structure and dynamics of the national-level MSPs differ from country to country, the MSPs share some common characteristics, as shown in Box 3.

Box 3: Common characteristics of national-level MSPs in PROLINNOVA

- Facilitation provided by a widely respected NGO at national level, hosting the national secretariat
- Formation of the MSP, its agenda and activities are inspired by an inception process that takes stock of who does what in ARD in the country, and identifies gaps and priorities
- Governance arrangements combine a higher-level steering structure with an operational team of staff in different organisations to handle day-to-day coordination
- High level of autonomy of CPs but adhering to principles and agreements made jointly at international level
- Diversified resource mobilisation through partners, special project funds mobilised nationally or regionally and/or through funds made available through the International Secretariat
- Relatively low levels of seed funding create momentum to seek partnerships.

In all the CPs, more attention and more funding has been invested in implementation of activities related to identifying and documenting local innovation and facilitating PID, while less attention has been given to activities designed to strengthen the MSP, including the national secretariat of the CP. The International Support Team provided some coaching on managing MSPs, but this would have deserved more focused and continuous attention.

Here, some ways through which the national-level MSPs could be strengthened are discussed.

Gaining wider-based engagement of member organisations

When new organisations join the partnership, it is essential to brief them about the PROLINNOVA initiative and to make its vision and spirit very clear, so that the new members can comprehend their roles and responsibilities. In order to increase the space that members have for engaging with the platform, it may be useful that the CP coordinator – possibly together with one or two NSC members – visits the new organisation and discusses the PROLINNOVA initiative with the director and managers, exploring the links with the organisation's own objectives and activities.

Opportunities (e.g. though Nuffic funding from the Netherlands but also through local funding sources) should be grasped to organise hands-on learning by as many people as possible within the partner organisations to expose them to the PROLINNOVA concepts, approaches and practices. NSC members could also assist each other in holding information and capacity-development sessions within their respective organisations, so that wider organisational understanding and ownership of the PROLINNOVA initiative can be fostered.

Increasing the intensity and effectiveness of communication and learning

Within each country, the MSPs could make much more use of modern information and communication technology such as websites, e-magazines, e-newsletters, mobile phones or email lists to inform members and stimulate their participation. The communication strategy also needs to take into consideration the information technology available to small-scale farmers at community level, and explore possibilities of using radio programmes (including community radio)

and video films more intensively. Information may need to be translated into local languages. This would stimulate more widespread and active engagement of individuals in MSPs at different levels from the grassroots to international. National-level MSPs should incorporate into their action plans and funding proposals some activities that allow their interaction (e.g. cross-visits) with other PROLINNOVA CPs to be able to learn from each other how they deal with MSP challenges.

Facilitated review of CP structure and partnership arrangements

Members of the International Support Team and/or members of other CPs should help each of the three CPs review its current structure and partnership arrangements. The CPs need to consider carefully the pros and cons (including the costs) of pursuing legal registration and/or a permanent secretariat. Are there also other ways in which clear policies and administrative procedures and a secure and transparent financial base can be developed for the CP? The experience of PROLINNOVA–Kenya does not suggest that creating a legal entity facilitates local fundraising efforts. Registration of the CP as a business or as an NGO may militate against an MSP composed of both state and non-state organisations being actively engaged *inside* the structure. It could even lead to a situation in which the new structure competes with former partners. The argument that donors will not give money to non-registered MSPs does not hold. The CGIAR Research Programs are currently receiving large amounts of funding from donors without being registered entities; the funds go through a lead partner, i.e. an international research centres that is a legal entity. For each specific project under the PROLINNOVA umbrella, it may be better for the MSP to choose a host in which the donor has confidence that it can handle the project on behalf of the MSP, rather than creating a new (and statically centralised) entity without a convincing track record.

In any case – with or without setting up a new legal entity – the partnership arrangements within the current MSPs could certainly be improved. For example, greater use could be made of MoUs signed by the member organisations in the MSP. Such MoUs are semi-informal agreements that commit the members to the principles, vision and objectives of the CP. This would form the basis for establishing flexible operational structures: rules, regulations and policies acceptable to a diverse membership.

Mentoring and stepping up fundraising efforts

The PROLINNOVA International Support Team should make even greater efforts than in the past to engage the CPs in fundraising activities through joint strategy setting and coaching the CPs in the development of concept notes and proposals. This will have the double benefit of strengthening local capacities while also ensuring that the CPs do not fall into the role of passive recipients of externally generated funds. However, this will be possible only if the International Support Team can generate funds to allow it to play this role.

Local (in-country) fundraising should be stepped up so that a larger number of the member organisations in the MSPs can undertake activities under the umbrella of PROLINNOVA and also so that more funds are available for the work involved in facilitating the MSPs and coordinating the activities. Strong alliances among several PROLINNOVA partners in one country can serve as a way to leverage resources. Also regional (multi-country) alliances can leverage funds, including those that allow learning across the countries. During the last two IPWs, the Eastern African CPs (in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) have discussed the merits of setting up a regional PROLINNOVA platform. They already took a first step towards this in their joint proposal to Rockefeller Foundation, which led to the current CLIC–SR project. However, greater efforts on the part of all

four national-level MSPs will be needed to create a strong regional platform for future joint ventures.

Stronger focus on mainstreaming PID

The work of the MSPs should be much more strongly focused on mainstreaming approaches of recognising local innovation and facilitating farmer-led research and development. This includes gaining the commitment from field-based, mid-level and senior management staff to consider how they may need to change their own practices as individuals and in their organisation. It may also require focused capacity building and rewarding mechanisms for new ways of operation. Key to all this will be triggering the incentive to engage – finding spaces to bring the PROLINNOVA experiences into the organisations of the MSP members in ways that reveal the potential benefits of the PID approach for their own work.

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