

PROLINNOVA at work

Global Partnership to Promote Local Innovation



PROLINNOVA *at work...*

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Introducing Participatory Innovation Development (PID)

Local innovation – the process by which people in a given locality discover or develop new and better ways of doing things – using the locally available resources and on their own initiative, without the pressure or direct support from formal research or development agents.

Local innovations (with an 's') – the outcomes of this creative process, for example, farming techniques or ways of organising work that are new for that particular locality.

Local innovation = process

Local innovations = outcomes of the process

Who are farmer innovators? – All farmers innovate to some extent, however little, many of them simply in order to survive. But the innovators valued by PROLINNOVA are those who are doing something outstanding to improve their lives, their communities and/or their natural environment. They are local people who develop new ways of farming or managing natural resources, building on local knowledge but using new ideas from various sources, including their own creativity.

What is PID? – Participatory Innovation Development is a process in which farmers and other stakeholders engage in joint exploration and experimentation, leading to new technologies or socio-institutional arrangements, such as new ways of regulating access to resources or new ways of community organisation, for more sustainable livelihoods. It often uses local innovations as an entry point to joint research.

PROLINNOVA is an international initiative aimed at Promoting Local Innovation in ecologically-oriented agriculture and natural resource management (NRM). It is a "Global Partnership Programme" under the umbrella of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR). This international community of practice, learning and advocacy was initiated by NGOs but involves also governmental organisations concerned with agricultural research and development (ARD). It focuses on recognising the dynamics of indigenous knowledge and on learning how to strengthen the capacities of farmers to adjust to changing conditions – to develop and adapt their own site-appropriate systems and institutions of resource management.

What does PROLINNOVA seek?

Vision

A world in which farmers play decisive roles in agricultural research and development for sustainable livelihoods.

Mission

To foster a culture of mutual learning and synergy in local innovation processes in agriculture and NRM.

Goal

To develop and institutionalise partnerships and methodologies that promote processes of local innovation for environmentally-sound use of natural resources.

PROLINNOVA seeks to:

- demonstrate the effectiveness of user-led innovation for sustainable development
- build strong farmer-extension-researcher partnerships
- enhance capacities of farmers, researchers, extensionists and policymakers in participatory approaches
- stimulate national and regional policy dialogue to favour local innovation
- set up platforms at various levels for reflection, analysis and learning about promoting local innovation
- integrate participatory approaches to farmer-led innovation and experimentation into research, extension and education institutions
- pilot decentralised funding mechanisms to promote local innovation.



Agali Awamu Farmers' Association: discussing the potential for a Local Innovation Research Fund programme



Monitoring the PROLINNOVA activities.

PROLINNOVA *at a glance...*

In each of the nine countries involved in PROLINNOVA by 2006 – Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nepal, Niger, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda – a local NGO convened the major stakeholders in ARD to design and implement a “Country Programme” (CP). The plans and activities undertaken differ according to the experience and self-identified strengths and gaps in each country, but common objectives include:

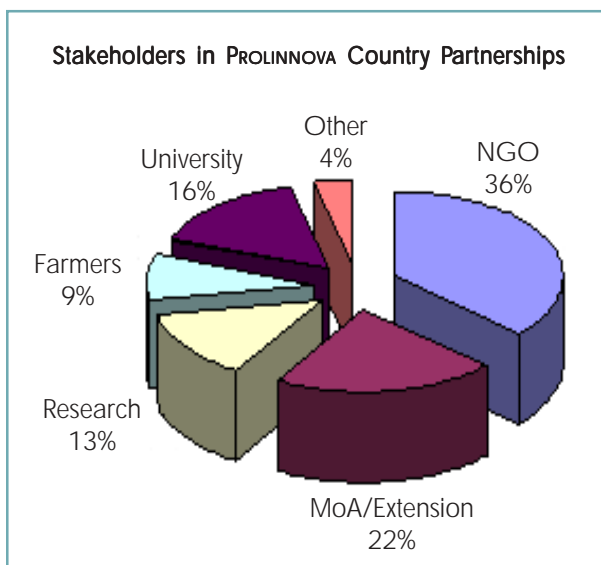
- to build research and development partnerships through recognising local innovation and engaging in joint farmer-led experimentation
- to strengthen the capacities of community-based organisations (CBOs), other NGOs and governmental organisations in PID
- to influence governmental policy and build local capacities to engage meaningfully in policy dialogue.

At the global level, the objectives are:

- to support local partners in building strong Country Programmes through backstopping and facilitation of sharing and learning
- to promote worldwide awareness and credibility of farmer innovation and PID.

Involving multiple stakeholders in the CPs promotes shared ownership of PROLINNOVA’S principles and strong commitment to working together to institutionalise PID. By following a country-level as well as an international orientation, PROLINNOVA can generate international public goods while responding to the unique needs in the different countries in which it operates. By linking local action with a global agenda, PROLINNOVA demonstrates that site-specific work can feed effectively into higher-level policy dialogue.

PROLINNOVA was conceived in December 1999, when Southern and Northern NGOs – with support from the GFAR, the Non-Governmental Organisations Committee (NGOC) of the Consultative Group on International



Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs – met in France to identify ways to scale up participatory approaches to ARD. At this meeting, ETC EcoCulture, a Netherlands-based NGO, was asked to facilitate the process of building a multi-national and multi-stakeholder PROLINNOVA programme.

In 2003, with support from IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), key ARD organisations in Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda collected local experiences related to farmer innovation and PID and held workshops to draw up country-level plans to scale up and institutionalise these approaches. In 2004–06, funding from DGIS (Netherlands Directorate General for International Cooperation) allowed them to start implementing their plans and to support similar process in six more countries (Cambodia, Nepal, Niger, South Africa, Sudan and Tanzania).

In late 2006, a sister programme (PROFEIS – Promoting Farmer Innovation and Experimentation in the Sahel) received funds from Misereor to expand the activities in francophone West Africa beyond Niger to include also Senegal, Mali and Burkina Faso. Interested organisations in the Andes, Kenya, Mozambique and the South Pacific have also started initiatives to promote local innovation.



Farmer innovators in northern Ethiopia watch a video on farmer innovation.

Participatory programme management

Although the institutional set-up differs between countries, the general pattern is that a local NGO serves as secretariat for a **National Steering Committee (NSC)** made up of people from governmental research, extension and education institutions, other NGOs and farmer organisations. The NSC defines the strategies of the CP, ranging from farmer-led experimentation to national-level advocacy. A smaller **Core Team** or **Working Group** is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of activities.

An **International Support Team (IST)** handles international coordination and supports the country-level activities in capacity building, networking, web-based knowledge management, documentation, publishing and advocacy. It is made up of IIRR (based in the Philippines), the CIS-VUA and ETC EcoCulture (both based in the Netherlands) and the coordinators of PROFEIS and the FAIR (Farmer Access to Innovation Resources) project.

The **PROLINNOVA Oversight Group (POG)** serves as a governance mechanism to ensure accountability and to give guidance to the international programme. It is made up four persons elected from and by the CPs, one elected from and by the IST, and three external persons elected by all CPs and the IST.

POG: PROLINNOVA Oversight Group

- **Four CP-level persons** from the regions where PROLINNOVA is active:
 - Andes (Ms) Elizabeth Vargas, Bolivia
 - Asia-Pacific (Mr) Ung Dara Rat Moni, Cambodia
 - Francophone West Africa (Mr) Bassoum Souleymane, Senegal
 - Rest of Africa (Mr) Amanuel Assefa, Ethiopia
- **Three external members**
 - (Ms) Beatriz Del Rosario, Philippines
 - (Mr) Oliver Oliveros, France
 - (Mr) Scott Killlough, USA
- **IST representative**
 - (Mr) Will Critchley, Netherlands
- **Secretariat** (*ex officio*)
 - (Ms) Ann Waters-Bayer / (Ms) Chesha Wettasinha, ETC EcoCulture

PROLINNOVA *accomplishments* *in 2004-2006*

Recognition of local innovativeness

Thus far, the most important accomplishment across all countries has been making stakeholders aware of the value of local innovation and of engaging in PID.

The entry point to PID is recognising local innovativeness. Both the process of innovation and the outcomes of this process – the local innovations – are documented by researchers, development workers, teachers, students and local people themselves. CP partners do this in many different ways: catalogues, posters, leaflets, brochures, booklets, magazines, TV and radio broadcasts, photographs, PowerPoint presentations and organising visits to innovative individuals and groups.

Innovation catalogues to raise awareness and share good ideas

Several PROLINNOVA CPs have used the preparation of catalogues of local innovations as a means to stimulate researchers and development workers to document and give recognition to the good ideas that local people are developing on their own initiative. Partners in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nepal and South Africa have published and disseminated such catalogues, with full-colour photographs of the innovations and innovators. The catalogues are used to raise awareness about local innovativeness and to provide practitioners and researchers with information of new technologies and socio-institutional arrangements that work for those who developed them. The publication of their accomplishments is a source of pride for the innovators and a source of inspiration for other people.

In 2005, in cooperation with the COMPAS (Comparing and Supporting Endogenous Development) programme, the use of participatory video (PV) was piloted. Having seen its potential to enable people to tell their stories directly in their own terms, partners in Ghana introduced PV to several farmer groups. In 2006, PROLINNOVA organised a workshop in Uganda on Farmer-Led Documentation in cooperation with PELUM (Participatory Ecological Land Use Management) and Novib (Oxfam Netherlands). Participants learned from each others' experiences in PV and other ways of documentation facilitated by outsiders, but planned and carried out by farmers.

Community in north Ghana makes its own radio broadcast

Bushfires are a serious problem in north Ghana. During our work with local people, we discovered several innovative ways of managing bushfire that could be useful to others. Radio is an effective channel to share messages, but we wanted to move away from conventional radio, in which journalists do most of the scripting, to community radio, in which the people concerned have more say in the content and presentation of the programme. We helped community members develop the content of a radio programme on bushfire management by arranging group discussions with people from different parts of the community. We used PRA tools to identify main themes and to elicit the issues to be raised within them. The community discussed how local knowledge, practices and innovations are applied to manage bushfires. We recorded the discussions, played the tapes back to the group, and edited the scripts based on feedback from group members. The programme was aired in three languages, through three local radio stations twice a week in the early evening, over a period of six months.

Source: David Millar (University for Development Studies, Tamale), PROLINNOVA–Ghana

Participatory learning and exchange among partners

Two courses to train facilitators in PID were conducted by the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) – the first in the Philippines in 2004 and the second in Uganda in 2006. Two persons from each CP attended each training workshop and then trained others in their home countries. As a result, about 520 research, extension and NGO staff and 2100 farmers have been trained in PID. Two other international courses were held in cooperation with partners: PROLINNOVA and PELUM–Tanzania co-organised training in Advocacy and Policy Dialogue; and PROLINNOVA, PELUM–Uganda and Novib co-organised the international workshop on Farmer-Led Documentation.



Farmer innovator explains his work to other innovators and government technicians

Since 2004, partners have met annually to share progress, to learn from the challenges and good practices in building multi-stakeholder partnerships, to plan international activities together and to harmonise Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) within the international programme. In 2004, the international meeting was organised in Ethiopia, in 2005 in Uganda and in 2006 in Cambodia.

Aside from the training workshops and annual meetings, the PROLINNOVA website (www.prolinnova.net) and list-serve (yahoogroups) are the main platforms for sharing ideas among CPs and with international partners. At national level, the CPs use mainly workshops, field visits and NSC meetings to foster multi-stakeholder learning from local innovativeness and from efforts to enhance it through joint farmer-led research.

PID in beekeeping in Tigray, Ethiopia

The Northern Typical Highlands team of PROLINNOVA–Ethiopia brought together farmer innovators at an Innovative Farmers Workshop held in Axum in central Tigray in April 2005. The farmers explained their innovations to each other and to formal researchers and technical experts. The workshop participants selected beehive modification and queen-rearing innovations by a woman beekeeper, Ms Gidey Aregay, and a male beekeeper, Mr Gebrehiwot Mehari, to be explored further in joint research. Each innovator serves as a nucleus in the village, working together with 3–4 local farmers with similar interests. They are looking into:

- the optimal ratio of mud, dung and other materials for constructing the beehive with a view to its strength, durability, regulation of temperature and insulation against noise;
- how to estimate colony size and the quality and quantity of honey production; and
- understanding seasonality in the life cycle of the queen so as to improve the queen-rearing business.

Each group meets every second weekend to assess what has come out of their research and to plan what to do next. They meet on their own without facilitation by outsiders. Sometimes, other local farmers join to observe and comment. Occasionally, the local development agents and district-level subject matter specialist join the meetings and help document the farmer-led research.

Source: Hailu Araya & Abera GebreAmlak, PROLINNOVA–Ethiopia



Locally improved version of the introduced beehive.

Gradually changing mindsets

The initial attempts to engage in PID have shown that the approach demands a radical change in the mindset of extension workers and scientists, who are not used to the role of supporting farmer-led research. They may enter PID with enthusiasm and good intentions, but old habits (such as wanting to control an experiment) die hard. It is a long and complex process to change their attitudes and behaviour. The CP partners are therefore continuously trying to stimulate reflection by different actors on their roles in participatory research and development and the implications for their work, in order to bring about these personal and institutional changes. The coordinators of PROLINNOVA–Ethiopia, Tesfahun Fenta and Amanuel Assefa, have formulated the challenge as follows:

The role of experts and researchers in supporting and strengthening farmer innovation processes is duly recognised. The major challenge is to find out how scientists, experts and policymakers could support farmers with a changed attitude and behaviour, one that demonstrates recognition of the creativity and innovativeness of the local people.

Piloting decentralised funding mechanisms

With support from the French-funded DURAS (Promoting Sustainable Development in Agricultural Research Systems) programme, action research on Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs) is underway in Cambodia, Ethiopia, South Africa and Uganda, while the Nepal CP is piloting LISFs with its own funds. PROLINNOVA–South Africa coordinates this “Farmer Access to Innovation Resources” (FAIR) project. LISFs function as small competitive-grant schemes to which farmers can apply. Using these locally-managed funds, farmers can finance their own research and learning activities related to agricultural innovation and can draw in external expertise as they see fit.



Pastoral women in Ethiopia have developed their own innovations in milk processing and marketing.

Building partnership and advocacy

Acceleration of innovation at the local level requires effective collaboration between farmers and other resource users, on the one hand, and people from research, extension, marketing and other organisations, on the other. They need to pool their knowledge and resources so as to find ways of doing agriculture and NRM that work better in terms of sustainable land use and livelihoods. But they also need to support each other to be able to meet the challenge of bringing about institutional change and integrating the approach into their respective organisations.

Innovation Africa Symposium

In 2006, PROLINNOVA joined forces with three international agricultural research centres (CIAT, IFPRI and ILRI) to organise a symposium on agricultural innovation in Africa, held in Kampala, Uganda, on 20–23 November 2006. PROLINNOVA–Uganda and IIRR–Uganda arranged field visits to farmer innovators. The Innovation Africa Symposium was funded by the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, the World Bank and the organising institutions. It drew attention to agricultural innovation systems thinking and approaches in ARD organisations in Africa and beyond.

Partnership is needed at different levels, each with its own dynamics. At community level, open and equal partnerships are central to identifying possible improvements, experimenting with them and analysing and sharing the results, in short, doing PID. These need to be complemented by institutional partnerships between relevant organisations at higher levels in the country to create enabling conditions for the field-level collaboration, and to build up support for internalising the PID approach within the organisations. Finally, PROLINNOVA promotes partnerships among actors in ARD at global level, to create a platform for addressing concerns across countries and for learning from PID experiences and efforts to institutionalise the approach.

Championing PID at international meetings

With GFAR support, PROLINNOVA representatives presented achievements at regional and sub-regional ARD fora and to donors. At the 2004 GFAR meeting in Mexico, Environmental Alert presented the work of PROLINNOVA–Uganda. At the EFARD (European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development) conference in Switzerland in 2005, LI-BIRD and Farmer Support Group presented their partnership experiences in Nepal and South Africa. CEDAC presented PROLINNOVA–Cambodia experiences at the Asia Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) meeting in India in November 2006.

Growing support

PROLINNOVA has mobilised funding for its activities in many different ways. Three main types of funding support can be distinguished. The first is the main donor, the Netherlands Government through DGIS, for a programme covering nine countries. The second category consists of donors that fund specific activities and sub-projects: these include CTA, DURAS (France), GFAR, Misereor (Germany) and World Bank. The third category is the own contribution by PROLINNOVA partners in the countries and at the international level, mostly in the form of staff time and provision of facilities, as well as host organisations' coverage of travel costs to international workshops. Own contribution amounts to about 35% of total costs of the programme.



A husband and wife have developed their own form of drip irrigation.

The way forward

An external assessment of the PROLINNOVA global partnership programme in early 2006¹ concluded that it has made major progress in establishing multi-stakeholder partnerships at country level, a great achievement on its own. Showing how these partnerships work at both policy and field level makes an important contribution to the international ARD arena. This assessment, joint meetings and strategic planning at country and international level formed the basis for defining the overall strategy for the next phase of the programme. The planned activities continue to hinge on an effective combination of on-the-ground collaboration with innovative farmers and communities as a learning ground, and policy dialogue and other efforts to attain the relevant institutional changes within research, extension and educational institutions.



Farmers in South Africa have their say in research for development.

To ensure continuity, PROLINNOVA will continue to expand and diversify its donor group. DGIS support since 2004, now committed up to 2010, allows partners to operate the basic programme and, in so doing, to mobilise interest of other donors in complementary sub-projects. Over the next four years, particular themes of high concern to PROLINNOVA partners will be given increased attention. These include gender and HIV/AIDS issues, LISFs, farmer-led documentation, policy dialogue and curriculum development.

As flexibility and local ownership continue to be the motto of the programme, new multi-stakeholder initiatives in the Andes, Kenya, Mozambique and the Pacific and elsewhere should be able to “find their own way” within the network and to develop into what their partners and local constituencies feel most appropriate, be it as a “Country Programme” or in some other form of collaboration to engage in the international learning platform.

¹ Gonsalves J. External review of PROLINNOVA based on internal mid-term review. Silang, Cavite, Philippines. 2006.

Some key PROLINNOVA publications

PROLINNOVA *Working Papers (2004–06)*:

- Farmer Access to Innovation Resources (FAIR): findings from an international review of experiences
- Strengthening PROLINNOVA policy dialogue and advocacy strategy
- Research to promote local innovation: the case of “*siella*” mineral lick for livestock in northern Ghana
- Harnessing local and outsiders’ knowledge: experience of multi-stakeholder partnership to promote farmer innovation in Ethiopia
- Recognising and enhancing local innovation processes
- Reflections on the FAIR project

IK Notes (World Bank 2004–06):

- Ethiopia: a woman innovator speaks
- Participatory video: rural people document their knowledge and innovations
- Regional radio in Tunisia
- Building multi-stakeholder partnerships to promote farmer experimentation and innovation in Ghana
- Promoting local innovation: enhancing IK dynamics and links with scientific knowledge
- Burkina Faso: indigenous innovation in farmer-to-farmer extension
- South Africa: a smallholder’s innovative approach to producing and exporting fruit
- Innovation Support Funds for farmer-led research
- Ethiopia: endogenous and modern innovations – differing perspectives

PTD/PID Circular: periodic update on Participatory Technology/Innovation Development (2004–06)

- No. 13: Top Twenty publications on PID.
- No. 14: Annotated list of journals.
- No. 15: Electronic databases and websites.

In CIP-UPWARD *Sourcebook on participatory research and development for sustainable agriculture and natural resource management* (Los Banos, 2005):

- Participatory approaches to ARD
- Farmer innovation as entry point to participatory research and extension
- PTD where there is no researcher
- Developing partnerships to promote local innovation.

Facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships. Leusden: PROLINNOVA Secretariat. 2006.

Recognising local innovation. Leusden: PROLINNOVA Secretariat. 2006.

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