CHAPTER THREE

INSTITUTIONALIZING PTD IN RESEARCH INSTITUTES

Increasing numbers of research organizations have included development dimensions into their mission statements with PTD as an integral component. To become capable of doing PTD, however, a research organization needs to create and sustain an environment that encourages such forms of innovation. In such environments, license is given to pursue non-conventional experiments, training and exposure so that scientists can expand their imagination about different modes of research. The institute itself seeks out and provides opportunities for its researchers to interact with other actors in house and with actors outside the research institution as well. These new co-workers could also include farmers, community-based organizations, NGOs, and institutions of higher learning.

Blocks to PTD in Research Organizations

- Organizational culture (such as resistance to new ideas and limited emphasis on cultivating a learning culture)
- Prevailing view of what "good" science is about
- Lack of incentives and rewards for the personnel
- Limited skills and competencies among the staff
- Limited focus on the processes and approaches
- Limited resources are committed to documenting and analyzing methods.

Sources: Opondo C., Sanginga P., and Stroud, A.; Monitoring the Outcomes of Participatory Research in Natural Resources Management: Experiences of the African Highlands Initiative. Waters-Bayer Ann, Laurens van Veldhuizen, Scott Killough, Julian Gonsalves and Marise Espineli. Institutionalizing Participatory Technology Develoment: Lessons from a comparative study.

The reality is that many research organizations, however, are faced with numerous challenges in achieving this institutional environment and cannot adopt and institutionalize PTD successfully.

Issues in Research Institutes

Several issues internal and external to research organizations must be addressed if PTD is to be institutionalized successfully. With partnership as a basic PTD principle, sensitive organizational issues come to the fore affecting the interaction among researchers, extension workers and farmer groups.

In research institutes, there is a culture of individualism and specialization in which researchers develop a very specific, narrow area of interest and lose sight of the wider development perspective. Through their training and peer interaction, researchers become convinced of the superiority of their knowledge as compared to that of farmers and other groups.

The prevailing view of what "good" science is about reinforces this attitude. Replicability, the use of a limited range of statistical approaches and the acceptance of results by peers are more important to scientists than evidence that the research results are relevant to farmers' needs, and to have these spread over a wide area.

Researchers usually feel a sense of ownership over the protocols they construct and the papers they write. The bottom-line question is often whether the individual researcher is sure that he/she can use the findings for publication under his/her name. With shared learning, there will have to be new ways of recognizing intellectual property. Scientists will need to be motivated to share knowledge and recognition with farmers, especially if farmers provided part of the insights. At the end of the day, because knowledge is generated both by researchers and farmers, partners will have to consider whether to give the same acknowledgment, regardless of whether the person is a scientist, farmer, or extension worker.

> *Although there has been a general consensus regarding the need for farmer participation in research in Ethiopia, it has not been given sufficient attention in the past. Some researchers do not even consider participatory approaches to research to be proper science at all. To them, farmer participation meant the end of good research; they considered it*

rather as a better way of technology transfer, which they did not consider as the task of research. It was under such conditions that the project was launched in North Omo Zone with the overall goal to increase, in a sustainable manner, the incomes of resource-poor families in the project area and ultimately, through example, in Ethiopia as a whole.

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

Among these concerns is the direction and flow of funding, specifically how to get the funds to the PTD work place while ensuring institutional change. Whose research agenda becomes the priority: that of the farmers or the researchers? Funds sent through a research institute need to go through its bureaucracy. This could create stresses within the organization, challenge set priorities and roles (including scientists having to take on administrative tasks), and even possibly hold back project implementation. Scientists may lobby for separate funds under their control. Believing that their work is superior, some may use their track records and access to funders to "control" resources and the direction of the research. This is the case when a researcher insists that "when I write the proposal, I control the funds." In the same vein, donors may influence research priorities. Among these donors are commercial farmers who may be willing to fund research thereby drawing research institute time away from small farmers priorities of participatory nature.

Experiences shared during the workshop, however, showed that partnership and innovation in making financial decisions can be achieved. Following PTD principles, collaborative mechanisms in fund management will need to be created. This means having to find space for farmers groups or their interests in the planning and budgeting structures and cycles of research organizations. Specific portions of project funds may be allocated to farmer organizations in accordance with the work plans. Farmers then become as accountable as researchers. Agreements with farmer and other groups external to the research institute may be negotiated during budget meetings and then reviewed annually.

For many researchers, the positive interaction with and response from farmers is a reward in itself.

In the field, confusion in roles can arise among scientists in research stations, sometimes resulting in role conflicts particularly with extension workers. Those involved with partners outside formal research settings must weave through the intricacies of work at different levels where PTD has been incorporated in various groups. As roles change and conflicts arise, partners need to learn how to negotiate and resolve disagreements. Researchers still have an important role to play through their analytical skills to differentiate causes and effects, and the ability to design experiments that lead to clear results. They also know or can access knowledge on fundamental processes underlying the experiments as observed by farmers and the skills to write and report results systematically. At a more general level, researchers would need to be able to engage in dialogue, listen rather than lecture, cooperate rather than order, and need not become the key facilitators for the FPR meetings and other activities.

Hallmarks of research institutes using PTD

PTD programs place at the center of their processes not only technological development, but also changes in behavior and attitudes -their own and that of their partners'. With this at its heart, a PTD-oriented research institute must have both flexibility and accountability if it is to be coherent. At the same time, it must while interpret and build on existing knowledge with other groups outside the world that scientists are familiar and comfortable with. Especially for those that are publicly funded, researchers in these organizations are expected to benefit resource-poor farmers, help improve food security and alleviate poverty, while ensuring the satisfaction of donors and higher levels of the organizations.

Intrinsic to PTD is the control function of outcome monitoring when visions and outcomes are brought together. In their paper, Opondo, Sanginga and Stroud note that outcome monitoring characterizes and assesses in detail changes in the behavior of researchers and farmers as they engage in PTD. It represents a shift from assessing the technical outputs of research programs towards focusing on the changes in the behavior, relationships and actions of the people and organizations. This helps harmonize visions at various levels of research, from the field to the highest levels of strategic planning. The deliberate effort to monitor outcomes is seen in the East African ecoregional program, the African Highlands Initiative (AHI). Through

Characteristics of research organizations with PTD

- accountability to civil society groups and other end users of research products
- an environment that encourages experimentation
- behavior change and methodological innovation among scientists
- flexibility, budgets for innovation
- opportunities for researchers to be exposed to other actors
- exchange systems with other scientists and with farmers, a process of understanding how these exchanges can be done well
- outcome monitoring that helps clarify vision

outcome monitoring, the AHI studies the changes in the way researchers do their work and the way they interact with other groups in natural resources management. Since 1995, it has promoted participatory research by (1) integrating solutions to issues in natural resource management by adopting participatory and systems approaches; (2) strengthening partnerships and enhancing collaboration and capacity building of a wide range of institutions; (3) improving research through the integration of biophysical and social sciences research; and, (4) linking local policy formulation and technology development.

The high levels of accountability demanded from research managers and their peers are accompanied by official recognition, encouragement and rewards for experimentation and innovation. Having adopted a learning process within the system, these institutes formally expect adjustments in behavior and new methods of work among managers and staff. They also budget and allocate funds and other resources for experimentation and creativity. Experimentation extends beyond laboratories into fields, some-times with farmers carrying their findings and agenda to the institute. At other times farmers take up the work and new knowledge with other farmers.

Some organizations express their high regard and commitment to innovation by including farmer representatives in research policy-making boards. Here accountability for the finances, output, time used, impact on other partners and end users is shared in common planning and evaluation activities that include other partners. This expression is not easy to achieve as existing structures and mandates may prevent such levels of institutionalization even where decision-makers are convinced about the value of PTD.

In Asia, the sharing of findings is carried out by such groups as UPWARD, a network of individuals in participatory research and development (PRD). The network seeks to enhance institutional capabilities in PRD, particularly by supporting innovation by young scientists, through information, documentation, education and communication in Farmer Field Schools, PTD and concerted action among stakeholders.

What has worked in research institutes

The cases presented at the workshop showed that PTD can be advanced among research organizations at the program, institute and national levels. Entry points can be through research organizations or through their projects, as well as at various stages of the project cycle. Great value was placed on influencing policy makers, motivation, funding, partnerships, learning and an overall approach. There were lessons gained by workshop participants in efforts to institutionalize PTD in research organizations.

Successful implementers stress the importance of influencing policy makers and managers. Suggested methods include the exposure of decision-makers to PTD during mid-term project evaluations or in field settings. Advocates need to shore up evidence of success where different stakeholders cooperate and where new attitudes, norms and processes have taken root.

> *"It was with great surprise that Agricultural Research Council in South Africa discovered that they were doing PTD. Sometimes people don't know that they're doing PTD," said Tim Hart, an anthropologist with the research council.*

Issues in Research Organizations

- How are limited resources to be utilized? Who decides how they will be used?
- What now are the roles of researchers? Is the role of extensionist de-emphasized?
- What determines policy? Felt needs of farmers or expressed needs of researchers?
- What can motivate researchers to adopt PTD?
- Can't PTD be incorporated in research institutions? Does it have to be institutionalized?
- Does PTD respond primarily to the interests of commercial farmers who could pay for research or to the needs of subsistence farmers, who may not be able to pay?

At the program level, success went to those who were accountable for finances, output and time. Although it is not easy because existing structures, partners ensured common planning and evaluation processes and their discussion preferably in the entire research organization. Tasks were distributed to get researchers a chance to do what they were good at. Motivating researchers is crucial for PTD to continue.

At the institutional level, it was important to recognize PTD work by research managers and their peers. Institutionalization needs enough free space and resources for experimentation, as well as for possibilities for partnership with other actors. If a research organization is to become more capable of doing PTD, it needs to provide an institutional environment that encourages innovation in the way research is done.

National level research organizations need to be shown clear evidence of what PTD can do. Here it is important to show how PTD can feed more people in a short time.