

Facilitating Multi-stakeholder Partnerships:

Lessons from PROLINNOVA

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based on contributions from partners in the
PROLINNOVA Global Partnership Programme

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Acronyms

ARC	Agricultural Research Council
ARD	Agricultural Research and/or Development
AR4D	Agricultural Research for Development
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CTA	Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation
CIS-VUA	Centre for International Cooperation, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
DGIS	Directorate General for International Collaboration
EA	Environmental Alert
EFARD	European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development
GFAR	Global Forum on Agricultural Research
ICRA	International Centre for Development-Oriented Research in Agriculture
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IED Afrique	Innovation, Environnement et Développement en Afrique
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IIRR	International Institute of Rural Reconstruction
IST	International Support Team
LEISA	Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAAIF	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAADS	National Agriculture Advisory Services
NARDTT	National ARD Task Team
NARO	National Agricultural Research Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NGOC	NGO Committee of the CGIAR
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NSC	National Steering Committee
PELUM	Participatory Ecological Land Use Management
PID	Participatory Innovation Development
POG	PROLINNOVA Oversight Group
PROFIEET	Promoting Farmer Innovation and Experimentation in Ethiopia
PROLINNOVA	Promoting Local Innovation in ecologically-oriented agriculture and NRM
PTD	Participatory Technology Development
R&D	Research and Development
SC	Steering Committee
ToF	Training of Facilitators
UNCST	Uganda National Council for Science and Technology

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Summary

To accelerate innovation at the local level, effective collaboration between resource users and farmers and research, extension, marketing and other organisations is required: they need to collaborate to pull their knowledge and resources together to find better ways of developing agriculture and NRM.

Partnerships are needed at different levels, each with its own dynamics: at the level of communities and farming activities, at national and regional levels, and again on the international stage. A central justification for building partnerships is, simply put, to do with making the best use of available resources, financial as well as human resources. Limited levels of funds available can form a strong incentive for partnership building in order to access facilities and resources of partners. Partnerships can be effective only when partners adhere to basic principles – and allied to these principles are prerequisites. Here are the most important considerations:

- *Partnership as part of the agenda*
- *Shared ownership*
- *A culture of equality*
- *Matching individual interests with the common agenda*
- *Openness and transparency*
- *“Open nucleus”*: (the platform being prepared to change its composition)
- *Breaking down barriers of competition and territoriality*
- *Capacity building and learning by doing*
- *Starting by looking into what is already there*

To avoid conflict there are several necessary precautions. Roles should be defined – and there may be a need for formalisation through the signing of MOUs. Commitment should be established: and this grows from successful initial joint activities: the partnership quickly gains momentum if an “entry-point activity” is strategically chosen. Good and effective communication is the central strategy to achieve openness and transparency. A regular flow of information is critical for implementation and coordination of activities. It is important that roles and responsibilities are clarified from the outset. Good facilitation is critical. Is there need for training or a requirement to hire external expertise? The facilitating organisation must focus on mediation through assuming a neutral role.

When building international partnerships a bottom-up process using participatory planning methods is critical: from the sub-national and national levels upwards. This is the only way to create a really jointly-owned multi-stakeholder partnership at the international level. Problems are inherent to any partnership and working together in multi-stakeholder partnerships is a challenge for which there is no perfect model that will guarantee success. Most lessons will be learnt by doing. Monitoring, analysing and understanding this process is fundamental to build a strong programme while, at the same time, providing learning grounds for the partners.

Resumen

La colaboración entre campesinos (incluyendo a los indígenas y sus organizaciones) e investigadores, extensionistas, organizaciones involucradas en comercialización y otros actores sociales es esencial si lo que se busca es un incremento y fortalecimiento de los procesos de innovación a nivel local. Esos actores necesitan concertar sus conocimientos y recursos con el objetivo de encontrar formas más eficientes de emprender el desarrollo agrícola y el manejo de los recursos naturales.

Esta concertación es necesaria a diferentes niveles: a nivel local (de comunidades campesinas), a nivel nacional y regional, y a nivel internacional. Cada uno de estos niveles presenta una dinámica específica. La justificación central para la construcción de alianzas es, formulada de manera sencilla, hacer mejor uso de los recursos disponibles, tanto financieros como humanos. La falta de recursos financieros, por ejemplo, puede llegar a ser un fuerte incentivo para la colaboración entre actores. La colaboración solo será efectiva cuando los actores involucrados se adhieran a principios comunes. Entre los más importantes podemos encontrar:

- La colaboración como parte integral de la agenda de discusión
- El compromiso y la responsabilidad compartida
- Igualdad entre participantes
- Una combinación entre los intereses individuales y la agenda común
- Apertura y transparencia
- “Núcleo abierto” (la plataforma de concertación está dispuesta a cambiar su composición)
- Romper las barreras de la competencia y la territorialidad
- Capacitación y formación (aprendizaje a través de la práctica)
- Inicialmente, basarse en lo que ya se está aplicando

Para minimizar el riesgo de conflictos, se deben tomar algunas precauciones: la distribución de los papeles y responsabilidades debe ser claramente acordada y formalizada a través de acuerdos por escrito. Se debe fomentar el compromiso, el cual normalmente se incrementa cuando las actividades iniciales (estratégicamente elegidas) son exitosas. Una comunicación eficiente y eficaz es fundamental para garantizar la apertura y la transparencia. La obtención y circulación de información de manera regular es clave para la implementación y coordinación de actividades. Una buena moderación es esencial: la organización moderadora se debe enfocar en mediar, asumiendo un papel neutral. Los actores deben preguntarse: ¿existe la necesidad de organizar entrenamientos o de contratar expertos externos?

La única manera de crear una alianza entre diferentes actores sociales a nivel internacional es iniciar la construcción de dicha alianza a través de un proceso “de abajo a arriba” – desde los niveles subnacionales y nacionales – usando métodos de planeamiento participativo.

Los problemas y conflictos son una parte integral de cualquier alianza. Trabajar con otros actores sociales es un reto: no existe un modelo perfecto que garantice el éxito. La mayor parte de las lecciones se aprenden a partir de la práctica. El monitoreo y el análisis de ese proceso es fundamental para la construcción de un programa fuerte y que, al mismo tiempo, resulte en una fuente de aprendizaje para todos los participantes.

Résumé

L'accélération de l'innovation au niveau local exige une collaboration efficace entre les utilisateurs de ressources et les paysans d'une part, et d'autre part entre la recherche, la vulgarisation, la commercialisation et les autres organisations : Il existe donc un besoin de collaboration entre acteurs et la nécessité de mise en commun des connaissances et des ressources afin de trouver de meilleures voies de développement de l'agriculture et de gestion des ressources naturelles. Les partenariats sont nécessaires à différents niveaux, chacun avec sa propre dynamique : au niveau des communautés et des activités agricoles, aux niveaux national et régional et enfin au niveau international. La meilleure utilisation des ressources disponibles (financières et humaines) constitue la principale justification du développement du partenariat. Des niveaux limités de fonds disponibles peuvent constituer une forte motivation pour bâtir des partenariats afin que les partenaires puissent partager les commodités et les ressources. Les partenariats ne sont efficaces que lorsque les partenaires partagent des principes de base, et l'adhésion à ces principes est une condition préalable. Voici les considérations les plus importantes :

- *Le partenariat en tant que partie du programme;*
- *Une appropriation partagée;*
- *Une culture d'égalité ;*
- *Des Intérêts individuels en adéquation avec le programme commun;*
- *Une ouverture et une transparence;*
- *“un noyau ouvert” (plate-forme préparée au changement de sa composition);*
- *Des barrières de compétition et de territorialité brisées;*
- *Un renforcement des capacités et un apprentissage par l'action;*
- *Débuter par la recherche de ce qui existe déjà.*

Plusieurs précautions doivent être prises afin de réduire les conflits. Les rôles et les responsabilités doivent être définis ; il se peut qu'il soit nécessaire de les formaliser au moyen d'accords écrits et signés. Un engagement doit être établi et cela se développe à partir d'activités initiales conjointes réussies : le partenariat gagne du terrain rapidement si une 'activité point d'entrée' est stratégiquement choisie. Une communication bonne et efficace est indispensable pour obtenir une ouverture et une transparence. Un flux régulier d'informations est essentiel pour la mise en place et la coordination des activités. Une bonne facilitation est cruciale. La question suivante doit venir à l'esprit: y a-t-il un besoin de former ou de faire appel à une expertise extérieure ? L'organisation fer de lance doit se focaliser sur la médiation en adoptant une position neutre.

La seule façon de développer un partenariat international multi acteurs sociaux réellement co-approprié est de bâtir le partenariat à travers un processus de bas vers le haut : à partir des niveaux régional et national et puis progresser vers les niveaux les plus haut (en utilisant des méthodes participatives de planification). Les problèmes et les conflits sont inhérents à tout partenariat. Travailler ensemble dans un partenariat multi acteurs sociaux est un défi : il n'existe pas de modèle parfait qui garantit le succès. Beaucoup de leçons seront apprises par le biais de la pratique. Il est fondamental de faire le suivi, d'analyser et de comprendre le processus afin de développer un programme rigide et en même temps fournir aux partenaires des expériences d'apprentissage.