



West and Central Africa Prolinnova Platform (WeCAPP)

Plateforme Prolinnova d'Afrique Occidentale et Centrale (PPAOC)



BACK-TO-OFFICE REPORT – VISIT TO MALI COUNTRY PLATFORM

26–29 November 2017

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1. Introduction

The visit to PROFEIS–Mali, a Country Platform (CP) regarded as part of the international PROLINNOVA network and currently represented in the PROLINNOVA Oversight Group (POG) by Djibril Thiam, was aimed mainly at allowing the new Subregional Coordinator (SRC) – who is still unknown to most partners in the CPs in West and Central Africa – to establish contact with the CPs in WeCAPP/ PPAOC. This will help lay the basis for good collaboration over the next three years. It will also provide an opportunity to inform the CP about the PROLINNOVA network’s organisational and operational guidelines and thus help correct the anomalies in the CP, if any. The local visits and exchanges with the partners were meant to make it possible more specifically to:

- Get to know the CP coordinators and partners;
- Investigate the organisation and functioning of the CP;
- Identify difficulties encountered by the CP;
- Inform and sensitise the CP coordinators and partners with regard to PROLINNOVA’s guidelines, the support they can expect from the SRC and the prospects and plans in terms of regionalisation and transfer of international PROLINNOVA bodies to the South.

2. Expected results

The expected results of this visit were:

- The CP and the SRC know each other better and the bases for their collaboration are clearly established;
- Anomalies with regard to structure and functioning of the CP are identified and an action plan is jointly agreed with the CP coordinators and governance structures for their correction;
- Difficulties of the CP with regards to platform activities and project implementation are known and solutions are suggested;
- The CP has a better knowledge of the PROLINNOVA guidelines and are in a better position to respect them;
- The CP has a better knowledge of the challenges related to the regionalisation and Southernisation of PROLINNOVA, and undertakes to play its roles to overcome these challenges.

3. Activities performed

This visit was finally part of a Participatory Innovation Development (PID) training organised by the partners of the Mali CP.

3.1. Sunday 26 November 2017

This day was entirely dedicated to international and local travel. When I arrived in Bamako in the afternoon, I immediately joined the leaders of the Mali CP, with whom I travelled to Ségou, where the PID training was planned to take place.

3.2. Monday 27 November 2017

On this day, I had a lot of interaction with the Mali partners. We got to know each other more during the different breaks in the training. I sought to understand the organisation, the functioning and the difficulties of the Mali CP through individual and small group discussions with the CP leaders involved in the Ségou training. These were often short exchange sessions, since the CP technical committee members were both the organisers and the trainers, and had limited availability of time.

I had the opportunity to introduce myself to the participants and to interact with each of them. I intervened during this training to clarify some concepts such as local innovation and participatory innovation development, and to explain the steps of PID in order to contribute to better understanding by the participants (Photo 1).



Photo 1: The SRC giving explanations to the participants

3.3. Tuesday 28 November 2017

I had the opportunity to explain in more detail the purpose of my mission to the Mali partners. For about thirty minutes granted by the leaders of the Mali platform, I introduced the PROLINNOVA network to the participants and explained with details the process of regionalisation, the role of the SRC, as well as the expected contributions of the CPs to the successful implementation and the development of the PROLINNOVA subregional network.

The Mali partners appreciated this presentation, which allowed them to raise some difficulties that hinder their involvement in the PROLINNOVA network and their contribution to the realisation of its vision. The main factor raised by the actors was the language barrier, which makes them think that PROLINNOVA is an English-speaking network, unlike PROFEIS, which is a French-speaking network. The two networks cooperate, but they are not the same. For them, taking into account the French language will allow them to feel better integrated into the subregional network and better contribute to the achievement of its objectives. The PROLINNOVA Working Paper No. 30 and the policy briefs translated into French and printed by the SRC were shared with the participants, as part of the improvement of the policy dialogue at subregional level. More than 20 people took part in this meeting (Photo 2).



Photo 2: The SRC with the Ségou PID training participants

3.4. Wednesday 29 November 2017

This was the day of return to Benin.

4. Relevance of the visit and main results achieved

This trip had the merit of putting me in touch with the Mali partners. We had the opportunity to discuss the expectations of each other for the success of the regionalisation process initiated by PROLINNOVA in our subregion. The clarification of the misunderstandings contributed to strengthen the collaboration and the level of responsiveness of the Mali partners.

The Mali partners presented the platform's governing bodies that work well according to their comments. The updated lists of members of the national steering committee and the technical team are proof that efforts are being made to respect PROLINNOVA's values of good governance and the fulfilment of the minimum commitments and requirements of the international network.

The conditions of the mission did not allow having more details on the difficulties met by the Mali CP in the implementation of its various projects, in particular PROFEIS (Promoting Farmer Experimentation and Innovation in the Sahel) funded by Misereor and FaReNe (Farmer-led Research Networks) funded by the McKnight Foundation. However, the exchange visit that took place between FaReNe Mali and FaReNe Burkina Faso a few weeks earlier (06–08 October 2017) and the results reported by the participants testify to the success in implementing this project. The holding of the PID training through Misereor funding is also a proof that this project is being implemented successfully. This is the result of the experience that the actors have acquired over time through the PROFEIS project, which is in its fourth 3-year phase.

The Mali CP is now better informed about the PROLINNOVA guidelines and expressed committed to respect them for better development of the subregional platform and better visibility of the international network. Developments after this visit will show the extent of this commitment.

5. Conclusion

The general impression that emerges from my visit to Mali is that this CP has no great difficulties. The actors are well organised and have experience in promoting local innovation and implementing PID. The proof is that the CP did not use an outside actor to deliver its PID training to participants from several types of structures operating in their regions of intervention. This local expertise is an important asset that could serve in other countries within the West and Central Africa subregion.

