

Terms of Reference for the PROLINNOVA Oversight Group (POG)

Agreed by PROLINNOVA International Workshop participants on 12 March 2004 in Yirgalem, Ethiopia

Revised by POG on 12 March 2006 in Siem Riep, Cambodia

Revised by POG on 12 November 2006 in New Delhi, India

Revised by POG on 24 March 2007 in Toubab Dialaw, Senegal

Revised by POG on 30 March 2008 in Tamale, Ghana

Revised by POG on 7 May 2009 in Kathmandu, Nepal

Revised by POG on 24 August 2009 in Nairobi, Kenya

Revised by POG on 11 March 2012 in Bamako, Mali

Revised by POG on 11 May 2014 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Revised by POG on 14 May 2017 in Tamale, Ghana

Revised by POG on 8 April 2020, Zoom meeting

Revised by POG on 12 Jan 2023, Zoom meeting

Note: The PROLINNOVA international network (hereafter: “PROLINNOVA”) is in a transition phase during which subregional platforms are being formed by Country Platforms in Africa and efforts are being made to shift responsibilities for coordinating the network activities in Africa from the former International Secretariat to the Subregional Coordinators (SRCs). Some responsibilities will gradually be handed over by the POG to the subregional governance bodies that are to be set up in Africa by the subregional taskforces and SRCs.

Purpose of the POG: to ensure effectiveness of the PROLINNOVA international network and transparency and accountability to its country-level partners and donors.

Responsibilities:

- to provide overall guidance to PROLINNOVA regarding major issues and directions, including new areas of activity and restructuring of the network
- to provide oversight to PROLINNOVA from the perspectives of the country/regional-level platforms and donors
- to develop the PROLINNOVA strategy, policies and principles in consultation with the Country Platforms (CPs) and (Sub)Regional Platforms (SRPs/RPs) and to facilitate review over time
- to oversee adherence of the SRPs/RPs, CPs and the International Support Team (IST) of PROLINNOVA to the agreed strategy, policies and principles
- to oversee the functioning of the international network, including the financial management
- to arbitrate in conflicts between SRPs/RPs, CPs and the IST, as well as in conflicts between these and donors¹ (Note: This will need to be revised if and when regional governance groups are formed.)
- to ensure that adequate means of monitoring and evaluation are being applied to safeguard the integrity of PROLINNOVA
- to ensure that policy dialogue and advocacy activities are conducted effectively at international level.

Examples of areas in which policies and principles may be formulated and agreed:

- criteria for and procedure of including new partners (CPs)
- rules and sanctions in the partnership
- ways of ensuring openness for partners to express their concerns about the functioning of other partners, including the IST and the Northern Focal Point²
- ways of embracing differences and managing conflicts
- mechanisms for financial transparency and accountability
- sources from which funds may be mobilised (types of organisations from which funds will be accepted)
- ethical issues and standards in participatory research and development (code of practice)
- ensuring fair recognition of partners' contributions, with attention to Intellectual Property Rights.

¹ Arbitration of conflicts between country-level programmes will be the responsibility of the IST and SRCs/taskforces.

² Since May 2019, the Northern Focal Point is Agrecol Association for AgriCulture & Ecology, based in Germany.

Considerations:

- Because of cost considerations, much of the communication of this governance structure must be done virtually.
- The desire for transparency and accountability needs to be balanced against the costs required for very close monitoring.
- There is a need to balance formal and possibly lengthy decision-making procedures and control mechanisms versus the agility and flexibility of grasping opportunities to advance PROLINNOVA's agenda.
- In primarily long-distance discussions and decision-making, large groups are unwieldy.
- From the outset, PROLINNOVA was envisioned as an open network seeking to include partners in as many parts of the world as possible. Therefore, the number of partners is likely to grow, and the governance mechanism will need to be reviewed periodically by a wider group of partners.
- Members in the governance group should include external expertise and "neutrality" (i.e. independent persons not directly involved in activities funded through PROLINNOVA) but should also include perspectives of partners directly involved.

Membership:

The POG will be composed of up to ten (10) persons:

- 5 independent members, including at least one bringing in the perspective of farmer organisations
- 4 members from Country/(Sub)Regional Platforms (1 from the Latin America, 1 from the Asia-Pacific region, 1 from Eastern & Southern Africa and 1 from West & Central Africa) – to the extent that there are at least two active CPs in the (Sub)Region (see below)
- 1 member from the IST³

A POG Secretary (*ex-officio* member) from the IST provides secretarial and organisational support.

The independent POG members will serve for a two-year term, from 1 July until 30 June two years later. The membership of each independent member may be renewed for a second two-year term. A member from a Country/(Sub) Regional Platform may serve for one 3-year term only; a person from another platform in the (sub)region will then fill the seat. The member from the IST will change on a rotational basis every two years. The IST will appoint the *ex-officio* member to serve as secretary.

The POG members will elect two co-chairs for a two-year term. A co-chair may be re-elected for an additional term. In electing or re-electing co-chairs, attention will be given to ensuring some degree of continuity, i.e. replacing both co-chairs at the same time will be avoided whenever possible.

The independent members of the POG act **in a personal capacity**, as experienced persons committed to the goals of PROLINNOVA – but will, ideally, be acting with the backing of their organisations. The POG members from the CPs do not represent their particular institution or CP but rather **all the CPs in their region**, and bring perspectives from that region into the POG. The representative from the IST brings in the perspectives of all IST members. The independent members are not linked to specific geographical regions.

The quorum will be over 50% of the members. With the current configuration, this means that the quorum is met when **five** of the nine elected members (or their approved substitutes – see below) attend the meeting.

At least once every two years, the responsibilities, structure, membership and functioning of the POG will be reviewed at the International Partners Workshop (IPW). The mechanisms for selecting/electing POG members may be adjusted at this time.

POG members will receive no remuneration for their services, but – to the extent possible, depending on available budget – costs will be covered for taking part in the IPW, when a face-to-face meeting of the POG will take place.

³As of November 2020, the members of the IST are: Chesha Wettasinha, Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), Netherlands; Ann Waters-Bayer & Fanos Mekonnen, Agrecol Association for AgriCulture & Ecology, Germany (Northern Focal Point of the PROLINNOVA network); Brigid Letty, Institute of Natural Resources (INR), South Africa; Annie Secretario, International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR), Philippines; the Subregional Coordinators for Eastern & Southern Africa and for West & Central Africa (Jacob Wanyama & Abdel Ali, respectively) and the Regional Coordinator for Asia, Sharad Rai. This composition will change in the course of regionalisation of the network.

Criteria for selecting POG members:

- committed to participatory research and development (R&D) to promote local innovation processes in ecologically oriented agriculture and natural resource management and to institutionalise this approach
- experience in participatory R&D in ecologically oriented agriculture and natural resource management
- willing and able to give time and thought to guiding PROLINNOVA
- access to good electronic communication facilities
- capable of communicating well in English (as there are no funds available for translation)
- in the case of members from Country/(Sub)Regional Platform, active involvement in the platform
- ideally, experience in facilitating multistakeholder platforms or partnerships
- ideally, experience in mobilising resources for R&D projects and programmes.

The maximum level of diversity will be sought in terms of gender, geographical base and institutional background of the POG members.

Procedure for selecting POG members:

1. Selection of members from Country Platforms: Currently (since April 2017), the four seats for CPs in the POG are allocated to four regions: Asia & Pacific, Eastern & Southern Africa, West & Central Africa and Latin America. The POG may revise the allocation of seats in future.

Only CPs defined by the POG as being “active” (see Guidelines #8) are eligible to nominate and vote for POG members. The CPs in each region will organise their own procedure for selecting/electing a person to represent them in the POG. This will be facilitated by the coordinator in each of the four regions.

The active CPs are currently those in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, India South, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Philippines, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, United Kingdom and Zimbabwe. In order to qualify for a seat in the POG, a region must include at least two active CPs. If there is only one active CP in a region, the POG will decide which POG member from another region will also represent this CP.

2. Selection of member from IST: The member institutions in the IST may nominate any number of individuals from the IST, with a justification for each nomination. The POG Secretary will compile all nominations and justifications and will send the list to all IST members. From this list, each member institution will rank the candidates, with 1 as top ranking. The POG Secretary will compile the rankings from the member institutions into an overall ranking of the candidates and will ask the top-ranked candidate to join the POG. If s/he declines, the next-ranked person in the list will be asked.

3. Selection of independent members: The CPs and the IST may nominate any number of persons, with a justification for each nomination. The POG Secretary will compile all nominations and justifications and send the list to all CPs and the IST. From this list, each CP will rank the candidates, with 1 as top ranking; one ranking list per CP will be submitted. Each member institution of the IST will rank the candidates and the combined ranking of all member institutions will form the one ranking list submitted from the IST; i.e. the vote of the IST as a whole will be equivalent in weight to the vote of a CP as a whole. The POG Secretary will compile the rankings from the CPs and the IST into an overall ranking of the candidates. It will invite the top-ranked persons to join the POG. If a person declines, the POG Secretary will invite the next person in the ranking list.

In nominating candidates as independent members, efforts should be made to include:

- persons that come from donor organisations
- persons from national agricultural research systems, subregional or regional R&D fora, or international organisations with background and experience in institutionalising participatory approaches
- persons from NGOs with similar background and experience
- individuals who may no longer be attached to such institutions (e.g. are retired) but have a wealth of relevant experience and influence.

The nominees should be asked, either by the nominator or by the POG Secretary, whether they agree to the nomination, before their names are circulated for the election process.

Procedures for temporary substitution of POG members who cannot attend meetings:

POG members are expected to participate in person in the annual POG meeting at the time of the IPW and to participate also in the IPW itself in order to enhance engagement with network partners. If, under exceptional cases, a POG member from a CP or the IST finds it impossible to attend a particular POG meeting, s/he may propose another person from the region / IST and ask the members of that group (all CP coordinators in the region in question, or all members of the IST, respectively) if anyone objects. If no objection is received by one month before the meeting, the person proposed as substitute will be regarded as POG member and part of the quorum for that particular meeting, with rights of decision-making. If there is any objection, the person proposed as substitute will not attend the meeting.

Prior to the meeting, the POG member will brief the substitute, and this person will consult with partners in the region concerned.

Independent members of the POG who cannot attend a meeting in person may not name substitutes.

If a member cannot join a POG meeting in person but would like to take part via telephone, video or Skype, this virtual participation – if feasible – will be regarded as if it were "real" participation in the meeting. If a POG member communicates directly in this way during the POG meeting and/or contributes in writing prior to the meeting, a substitute may still attend the meeting. However, in relation to the specific point(s) discussed during the telephone, video or Skype communication, only the POG member may contribute to reaching a decision. The substitute will not have a vote on these points.

Procedures for fully replacing POG members:

In cases where a member is no longer able or willing to serve on the POG, the POG will take action to replace that member. First, it will invite as a member of the POG the person who was the "next-in-line" from the most recent election for that seat in the POG. If, for valid reasons, POG members do not agree with automatic replacement by the next in line, then they may ask the POG Secretary to conduct a new election process to fill that seat in the POG.

A replacement is to be announced within three months after the POG member is no longer able or willing to continue. Reasons for the POG to seek to replace a member could include: not participating in a meeting physically or virtually or not making written contributions, without justification; and/or continuously failing to respond to POG-related correspondence directed to the member. A warning will be given about not attending a meeting without justification and/or failing to communicate, before the POG makes a final decision about replacement.

Orientation of new POG members:

Outgoing POG members from CPs and the IST are responsible for supporting new POG members from their respective constituencies by way of briefing (handing over) and initial coaching of the new member. In the case of new independent members, the POG co-chairs and POG Secretary will provide a brief orientation.

Implementation of POG activities:

At least one face-to-face formal meeting of the POG will be held each year at the time of the IPW. A second face-to-face meeting of at least some POG members may be organised when possible, e.g. when several are in the same place for another purpose, e.g. attending an international conference. If the group attending such a meeting is smaller than a quorum and comes to a preliminary decision, this will be circulated to all other POG members for review. The decision can be approved by email if at least five members agree, i.e. the majority of the entire POG.

Between meetings, the POG members will communicate by email, voice-over-mail (e.g. Skype) or telephone/video-conferencing. The POG members will determine the frequency of meetings (face-to-face or virtual).

Decisions of the POG can be made during face-to-face or virtual meetings as well as by email.

The co-chairs, in consultation with the POG Secretary, will schedule the annual POG meeting and virtual meetings (Skype, video, telephone) with ample advance notice to allow for adequate planning of participation by all POG members. Virtual meetings should be announced at least two weeks in advance.

The POG members from the CPs and the IST are expected to:

- keep themselves informed about what is happening in their region / IST
- consult CPs in their region / IST members about their concerns and bring these into the agenda of the POG
- be able to present clearly issues to the POG that have come up in the region / IST
- contribute to the good functioning and wellbeing of PROLINNOVA
- feed back outcomes of the POG discussions to the CPs in their region / IST members
- assist the IST or – in the case of Africa, the SRCs and taskforces – in informing and advising groups wanting to set up new CPs in the region.

In addition, any partner in a CP or the IST may raise issues to the POG by conveying these through POG members or the POG Secretary, who will convey these to the POG co-chairs. The co-chairs will ensure that these issues are on the agenda of the next POG meeting (face-to-face or virtual) or will bring these into email discussion within the POG.

The POG members from the CPs may also grasp opportunities (such as participation by several PROLINNOVA partners in another regional meeting) to hold meetings of partners in their respective regions. They will communicate to the IST any decisions made at these meetings.

Reporting on POG meetings:

The detailed minutes of POG meetings will not be shared beyond the POG, the SRCs and the other IST members, so as to respect the norms of confidentiality. The draft minutes will be sent to the POG members and substitutes who attended the meeting, for them to verify that the minutes are true. The final version of the minutes will be sent to all POG members for information. Key decision points will be shared verbally with the CPs during the IPW and will be circulated in written form to all CPs by email.

In addition to the verbal feedback from the POG to the IPW, at every second IPW, the POG will arrange a more substantive interaction with the CPs, as a larger item in the agenda facilitated by POG members, involving a review of governance and decision-making processes and discussion of key decisions to be made.

Sub-committees:

In order to provide an opportunity for more engagement of POG members on themes in which individual members have specific competencies and interest and to give guidance to the IST/SRCs and the POG about related issues, sub-committees may be set up. These will be composed of one or more focal persons on themes identified by the POG. Whenever a new issue arises, the POG may identify one or more members with relevant expertise and interest to serve as focal person(s) for this issue. Should the need arise, other members can be added.

The sub-committees are expected to:

- maintain an overview of the PROLINNOVA activities under that theme
- bring relevant information into the POG discussions
- highlight key issues or decision points that may be required at the POG level
- coordinate with relevant focal persons within the IST
- respond to relevant communications coming from the network to the POG
- provide advisory support to the PROLINNOVA network, where possible.

Support (POG Secretary):

To the best of its abilities, the IST will provide secretarial and organisational support to the POG so that it can function well. This work will be remunerated to the extent that external funding allows (e.g. through including lines for IST work in project budgets). In other words, this work may sometimes be fully or partly *pro bono*.

The POG Secretary will be responsible for coordinating election procedures as described above. The Secretary will provide new POG members with basic information about PROLINNOVA, e.g. POG Terms of Reference, 4-page information sheet, most recent annual report, and list of contacts (names and email addresses) for CPs, (sub)regional taskforces, (sub)regional coordinators and IST.

To the extent possible, the POG Secretary will circulate information regarding some of the agenda points in electronic form prior to a POG meeting. In the agenda, the purpose of each point will be indicated. During the meeting, additional information may be provided in printed form, as required.