Investing in people = investing in long-term benefits

Purvi Mehta

‘I joined ILRI in 2009. Before working at ILRI, I was director of a non-governmental organization in India that worked with the government and over 68,000 farmers in technology transfer and capacity development. I also worked for three years with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) to build the capacities of local farmers in producing biotech crops.

‘One of ILRI’s historical contributions to development work has been its investment in capacity development. In the last three years, I have come across ministers, university professors and researchers in Africa who have benefited from ILRI’s capacity development programs. Most of these have trained at ILRI, attended seminars at ILRI or been postdoctoral fellows at ILRI. This large pool of regional experts is having a significant impact in development work across Africa.

‘I think investing in capacity development is not only about empowering future generations but also about ensuring sustainability. Development projects eventually come to an end but the capacities built into people stay with them and have a long impact. The people we empower become ambassadors of ILRI and of the livestock agenda.

‘At ILRI capacity development happens through graduate fellowship programs. Every year about 40 students join the institute. These students have helped us establish links with 39 universities across the world and many of them choose to stay on with ILRI after their programs end. In this way, capacity development is also an investment into ILRI’s human resources pool.
‘Capacity development also happens as we turn research outputs into developmental outcomes. Increasingly, both our donors and partners want to see the developmental impact of our research and evidence that our findings are reaching the grassroots. To take research to communities of farmers, national agricultural research centres and other boundary partners, we translate these research messages for end users through training of trainers programs and training manuals.

‘In future I would like to see ILRI use mobile technologies to increase the reach of our messages to the grassroots. I’d like to see more of our materials translated into local languages. And I’d like to see ILRI’s outputs have greater influence on policy decisions.

Contributed by Purvi Mehta, head of capacity strengthening

View a video interview:
http://ilriclippings.wordpress.com/tag/livestock/

On 9 and 10 November 2011, the ILRI Board of Trustees hosted a 2-day ‘liveSTOCK Exchange’ to discuss and reflect on livestock research for development.