Most recent agricultural research for development (AR4D) programs, including the second phase of CGIAR’s Research Programs (CRP), have a strong focus on addressing the drivers of poverty and malnutrition by tailoring interventions using an integrated systems approach. This approach also addresses existing social and gendered norms that may affect the ability of the poor to access and benefit from research resources and outcomes. Using an integrated systems approach has strong implications for the required capacities of researchers, who are experts in their own technical areas but may need help to integrate systems approaches in their work (i.e. gender and youth analysis).
and/or integration, and the facilitation of multi-stakeholder processes [MSP]). This calls for creative capacity development (CapDev) trajectories that address emerging capacity building needs in an iterative way.

Description

**Coaching** is a systematic approach to guided learning. It is a proven method based on adult learning principles, and has been effectively used to guide action learning for research or project teams (sometimes individuals, sometimes several people) within research organizations involved in agricultural development and innovation.

During the first phase of the CRPs, CapDev activities involved a mix of traditional approaches along with experimentation and innovation that has been recognized as good practice. However, instead of building on the experimental and innovative approaches in their second phase, many CRPs have taken a ‘business-as-usual’ approach to CapDev, with MSc/PhD training and ‘one-off’ workshops continuing to dominate activities and investments.

Coaching has been found to be an effective way to build understanding of process-oriented themes such as gender integration, facilitation of innovation, creation of conditions for integrating youth, and addressing behavioral change and intra-household dynamics to improve nutrition outcomes.

Understanding of these themes needs to evolve, which requires continuous engagement with the context, and an awareness of emerging needs, concerns and future challenges. Training may be used to impart particular knowledge and skills but tailored trajectories involve face-to-face, as well as at-a-distance, coaching from thematic experts. The latter could take place alongside ongoing support from a partner organization’s content specialists and/or in-country consultants, where applicable. The coaching team’s role is to act as a sounding board: to introduce concepts, tools, methodologies and facilitate reflection on past experiences that may be helpful for research teams on a specific thematic area. A coach must also motivate and trouble-shoot, as well as make links between various options and projects underway.

A typical coaching process will include the following elements:

**Step 1: Making a tailor-made coaching action plan.** An initial meeting (face-to-face or at-a-distance) will take place with the potential learner(s) to tailor a coaching pathway that supports the realization of the research, project, or option being supported. The needs of the researcher/development professional vis-à-vis the research/development intervention and the role of the coach will be discussed and together they will work out a coaching plan-of-action. This will include a set of tailored objectives for the coaching team, the main areas to be supported, a timeline (including expected numbers of hours/days required), and a list of expected deliverables for the coaching team.

**Step 2: Coaching-at-a-distance.** Through Skype, email and phone calls, coaches will ask questions, answer questions, and discuss the various challenges project teams are facing. Coaches will provide insights using their experience of ongoing projects (i.e. the immediate context of the learner), the existing body of literature, and their thematic experiences that are of relevance to the coaching. The responsibility for a proposal or intervention lies with the project team, but the coaching team will provide ideas, inspiration, new literature and direction, where relevant. The team may also offer feedback on proposals, analyses and reports.
Step 3: Coaching on-site. In some cases face-to-face support may be useful or necessary. This could be to develop proposals, introduce concepts, or to go into more depth on a particular project. On-site visits will be made where required.

Coaching individual researchers or development teams can be combined with elements of blended learning or serious games (see Brief 2 in this series for more information). Often there is also a need to build organizational and institutional capacity to create a conducive environment for the researchers or teams to apply their newly acquired knowledge or skills.

Four themes emerge as worthy of using coaching:

a. Gender integration in research
b. Applying the innovations systems approach
c. Integrating youth concerns and issues in research
d. Bringing agriculture and nutrition together using a gender lens

The scope and offerings of each theme are detailed below.

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<th>THEME OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>COACHING WILL HELP TO:</th>
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| a. Gender integration in research | • Balance gender with other objectives.  
• Find entry points where gender is relevant and will add substantively to the outcome.  
• Make links between various options and projects underway. |
| b. Applying the innovations systems approach | • Build a shared understanding of the AIS approach, integrated AR4D and innovation dynamics.  
• Reflect on the role of research in facilitating innovation and the function of innovation platforms.  
• Help facilitate multi-stakeholder processes (MSP) that effectively contribute to local innovation and socio-economic development. |
| c. Integrating youth concerns and issues in research | • Address youth-centered research questions, and how to better link research for development (R4D) to new business models.  
• Develop and test models for youth engagement and entrepreneurship in agri-food systems, especially agri-food value chains, and include pilots in wider scaling strategies. |
| d. Bringing agriculture and nutrition together using a gender lens | • Better understand the impact of intra-household dynamics on agricultural interventions with a nutrition focus.  
• Use this understanding to support efforts to better design, implement and monitor impact of nutrition sensitive interventions on gender and nutrition outcomes. |

Coaching trajectories on ‘gender integration in research’ and ‘facilitation of agricultural innovation’ has been successfully implemented in several projects in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, including projects under the Maize and Livestock and Fish CRPs. Coaching trajectories on nutrition and youth integration have been piloted in several projects in Asia (Cambodia) and Africa (Morocco and Zambia, among others).

Requirements

Resources required for a coaching trajectory can vary. A coaching trajectory for a research or project team requires an estimated 25 to 40 coaching days per annum (US$1,000 per day). Additional costs include travel, accommodation of the coaching team, and training workshop costs.
Acknowledgments:

Capacity development (CapDev) has been identified in CGIAR’s Strategy and Results Framework (SRF) as a strategic enabler of impact for CGIAR and its partners. It goes far beyond the transfer of knowledge and skills through training, and cuts across multiple levels.

This CapDev brief is part of a series of ‘Legacy Products’ developed under the CGIAR Research Program on Integrated Systems for the Humid Tropics (Humidtropics – www.humidtropics.org ) to help CGIAR Research Programs integrate key ‘capacity development in systems’ concepts into their work.

We would like to acknowledge Humidtropics and the CGIAR Fund Donors for their provision of core funding without which this work would not have been possible. For a list of Fund Donors please see: www.cgiar.org/who-we-are/cgiar-fund/fund-donors-2.

These CapDev briefs have been developed by representatives of the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA), the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), Wageningen University (WUR), and the CGIAR System Management Office.

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b. Applying the innovations systems approach: r.mur@kit.nl
c. Integrating youth concerns and issues in research: i.flink@kit.nl
d. Bringing agriculture and nutrition together using a gender lens: m.dhamankar@kit.nl

Resources required:

Resources required for a coaching trajectory can vary. A coaching trajectory for a research or project team requires an estimated 25 to 40 coaching days per annum (@ US$ 1000). Additional costs include travel, accommodation of the coaching team, and training workshop costs. In addition, there is a need to make available:

- sufficient funds for the integration and application of new concepts in research for development projects (e.g., 50 000 USD/project) to ensure resourcing of the project itself;
- organization’s experts participation in the project;