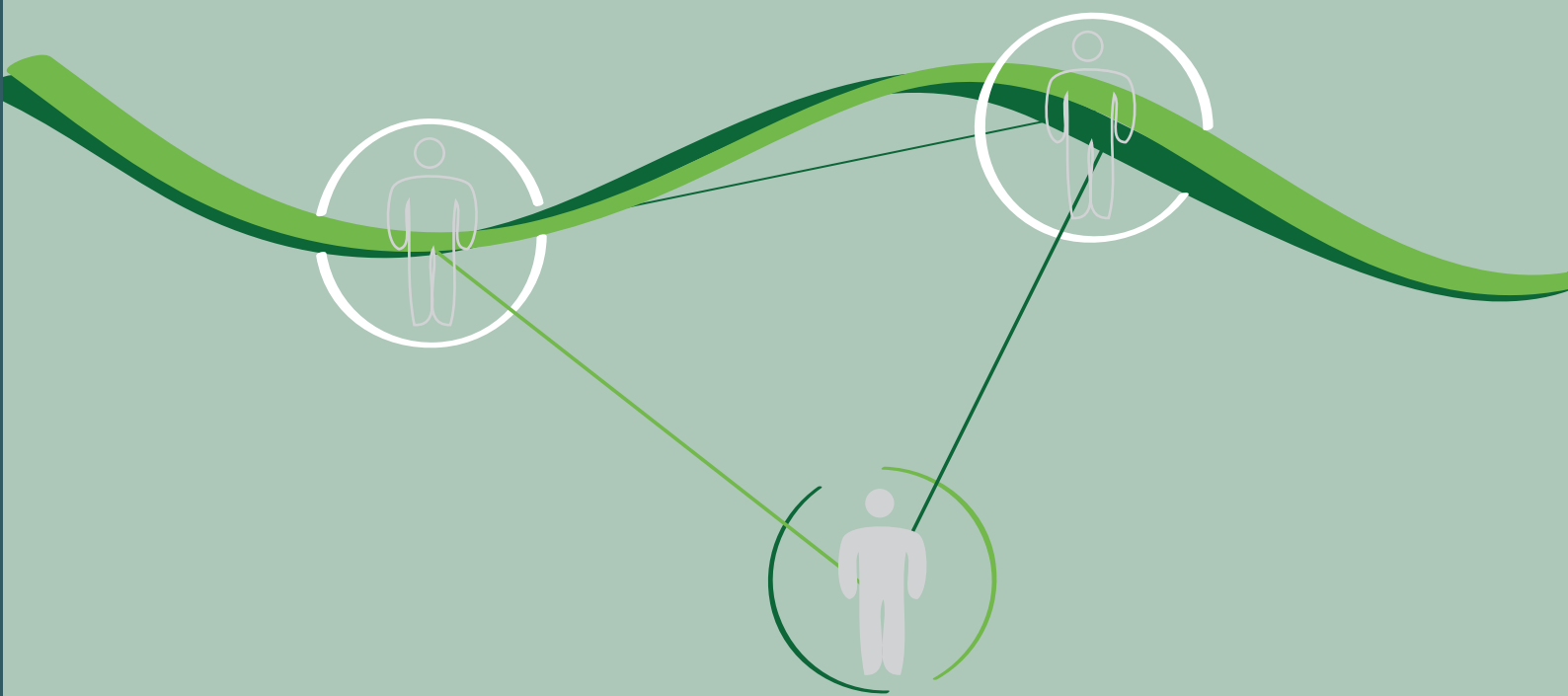


Partnership and networks in agricultural research for development

a learning module



Strengthening partnerships and networks in agricultural research for development

A learning module (Version 1.0)

Session 3: Why partnerships in agricultural research for development?

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Trainer's guide

Session 3: Why partnerships in agricultural research for development?

Purpose	To enhance the capacity of agricultural researchers to forge effective and efficient partnerships with other relevant stakeholders in the agricultural innovation system for achieving greater impacts	
Objectives	At the end of this session participants will be able to: • Explain the reasons for partnership • Describe factors enhancing and hindering impact of partnership	
Resources	• Flipcharts • White board • Blank transparencies • Flipchart and white board markers • Computer and LCD projector • Overhead projector • Copies of handouts 3.1 to 3.3 for each participant	
Time needed	45 minutes	
Method of facilitation		
Activity		Time
Presentation	Distribute handout 3.1 (presentation slides) before you start your presentation Give a presentation on ‘Why partnerships in agricultural research for development’? Allow some time for questions to make sure that participants understood what is presented. Distribute handout 3.2 to supplement your presentation	30 minutes
Exercise	Plenary discussion	10 minutes
Transition	Make closing remarks and transit to the next session	5 minutes

Session 3: Why partnerships in agricultural research for development? Summary of overheads

3.1

Why partnerships in agricultural research for development?

3.2

Session objectives

- Understand the reasons for forming partnerships
- Describe factors enhancing and hindering impact of partnerships

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3.3

Why partnership?



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3.4

What is partnership?

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- 'A mutually beneficial dynamic relationship between or among two or more persons or organizations having similar vision, goal, objective and interest' (*Ojha and Morrin (2000)*)
- Leverage resources and skills
- Recognize contribution and culture
- Maintain autonomy and independence
- Can be formal or informal

3.5

Key considerations in entering partnerships

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- Common interest space condition
- Cost–benefit condition
- Perceived benefit > investment cost + transaction costs
- Synergy through collaboration condition
- Economies of scale
- Cannot be achieved individually
- No conflict condition
- Proportional benefit condition

3.6

Networks

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Networking is a process by which two or more organizations and/or individuals collaborate to achieve common goals

Consist of nodes and links

- Contribute to social capital
- Various forms
- Partnerships are more formal than networks
- ICT encourages greater networking

3.7

Why partnerships

- Partnership decisions in an organization are strategic in nature
- Motivation
 - To add value to activity
 - To augment competencies
 - To ensure continuous strategic flexibility
 - To avoid appropriation



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3.8

Why partnerships (cont'd...)

- Mobilizing and augmenting resources
- Augmenting competencies
- Augmenting markets—market share
- Increasing the scale of activities
- Enhancing strategic flexibility
- Reducing duplication



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3.9

Why partnerships (cont'd...)

- Increasing service integration
- Improving access to end users
- Expanding capabilities
- Increasing learning
- Improving access to donor resources



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3.10

General motivations for forming research partnerships	
Type of partner	General motivation
Public sector	• Spur innovations that enhance public well-being and economy, satisfy customers • Leverage resources to maintain programs and fulfill agency mandates • Exercise stewardship of public money • Political considerations
Private sector and non-profit organizations	• Develop knowledge that results in cost savings or new products and services. • Develop new technologies that contribute to stockholder value • Hire best and brightest students
Academic institutions	• Develop new knowledge and convey that information to the next generation • Seek real-world context for new knowledge development

Source: NCHRP (2001).

3.11

Factors contributing to increased use of partnerships in agricultural R4D
• Changing paradigms • Increased use of system concepts and participatory research methods • Increased complexity of the developmental challenges and changed expectations • Increased competition

3.12

Factors contributing to increased use of partnerships in agr. R4D (cont'd...)
• Globalization of agricultural R4D and the changing organizational landscape • Emerging technologies—ICT and biotechnology • Redefining the role of government and increased emphasis on privatization of public services • Changing funding scenario and funding arrangements • Increased anecdotal evidence of socio-economic benefits of cooperation

3.13

Factors enhancing impacts of partnership

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- Direct contact with community
- A forum for regular meeting and sharing experiences
- Plan for impact
- Monitor and evaluate impact
- Making resources available—
earmarked resources for IA

3.14

Factors enhancing impacts of partnership (cont'd...)

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- Commitment, competence, continuity
and complementarity (4Cs)
- Mobilize local support for local
sustainability
- Promoting, participatory, trans-
disciplinary, multi-level, multi-
stakeholder and gender sensitive
approaches

3.15

Factors enhancing impacts of partnership (cont'd...)

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- Incentives
- Communication, dissemination and
feedback strategies and skills
- Documentation
- Speaking the right language

3.16

Factors hindering impacts of partnership

- Expert attitude and competition
- Fears and orientations
- Discontinuity
- Inflexibility of funding
- Lack of internal information and communication skills

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3.17

Factors hindering impacts of partnership (cont'd...)

- Internal tensions and conflicts
- Prejudices and mind sets
- Overambitious project design
- Overcommitted partner staff
- Insufficient support for partnership
- Lack of attention to the process of building the partnership and trust
- Lack of partnership and alliance competencies

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3.18

Thank you

Session 3: Why partnerships in agricultural research for development? Summary of presentation

3.1 Introduction

The major challenge facing the practitioners working in the agricultural innovation systems is to provide the goods and services to meet the diversified needs of ever increasing ‘consumers’ and society at large, effectively, efficiently and responsively. One of the key opportunities to achieve this is the better utilization of accumulated knowledge and the untapped resources around us. One of the untapped resources is the human, institutional and social capitals within the various R&D institutes, specifically the partnership that two or more institutes can forge to produce the synergy and unleashing of the accumulated energy to meet the needs of the society (Ojha 2002).

Innovation systems are about exploiting available and new knowledge for socio-economic use. Innovations emerge from systems of actors through a social process, in which networks of actors (players from the public, private civil society, research, enterprise and policy sectors—entire supply chain) play a crucial role. Innovation is a result of co-operation and is determined by interaction between them.

Partnerships form the core of the innovation systems and have primary purpose of knowledge sharing. This knowledge could be about constraints, opportunities, technology, production contexts and market conditions among others. This interaction and knowledge exchange leads to learning, development and deployment of new products and processes and ultimately, social and economic change. Therefore, very important in the process is how patterns of relationships, habits and practices either nurture or hinder knowledge flows, sharing and process of learning (learning by doing or by interacting).

Partnerships per se are not new. Partnerships and networks have been in existence since mankind started, and from the day that people began to create institutional and organizational structures. However, partnership activity on a wider scale as it now occurs is a relatively new phenomenon, having emerged over the past 15–20 years. In this chapter first partnerships and networks are defined. Then the factors which contributed to the increased use of partnership and networks in the agricultural R4D arena are discussed. Finally the benefits of partnerships are outlined, and some of the factors enhancing as well as hindering the impacts of partnership are listed.

3.2 What are partnerships and networks?

3.2.1 Partnerships

Conceptually, partnership is an extended form of group dynamics where two or more parties establish relationships, and leverage resources to work together with the expectation that each of the parties would achieve greater goal than working individually (Morse 1996). According to Ojha and Morrin (2000), ‘partnership is a mutually beneficial dynamic relationship between or among two or more persons or organizations having similar vision, goal, objective and interest.’ Partners leverage their time and resources, experience and expertise, and knowledge and skills to work together complementarily by dividing responsibilities based on comparative and competitive advantage and make decisions jointly. The partners recognize each other’s contribution, respect each other’s culture and strive to fulfil the assigned responsibilities. While working together they also maintain autonomy and independence and attain their goals and those of stakeholders. Partnership arrangements can range from informal

collaborating working relationships to formal contractual vehicles that detail alliances among diverse and dispersed organizations.

Hartwich et al. (2004) outlined some key considerations for entering into partnerships. These are:

- Common interest space condition — partners should have a common goal.
- The cost–benefit condition. One enters into partnership when the perceived benefits are greater than the sum of the investment costs plus the cost of interaction (the transaction cost).
- Perceived benefits > investment cost + costs of interactions.
- The cost in this case includes both direct and indirect cost (including opportunity costs) as well as tangible and intangible benefits. One enters into partnership when the perceived benefits are higher than those from equivalent investments in non-partnership arrangements.
- The synergy through collaboration condition
- Synergy results from economies of scale in the use of R&D resources (knowledge funding and infrastructure) which could not be obtained otherwise, from mixing complementary R&D resources, (e.g. Bringing knowledge about production and market together), from the effects of joint learning, from reduced costs in seeking and exchanging information.
- The no-conflict condition
- One enters into partnership when the generation of benefits does not substantially conflict with other interests. Partnerships may be very beneficial in terms of cost–benefit ratios (or returns to investment) that do not take into account the negative externalities (social and environmental conflicts).
- The proportional benefit condition
- One enters into a partnership when one's perceived benefits are not proportionately lower than those of their partners. Proportionality also takes into account the inputs that the partners provide, and therefore goes beyond fifty–fifty benefit sharing solutions or equal sharing of the pie.

One of the compelling reasons for forming partnership is the ability to achieve something together in a cost effective manner that no organization individually could have produced on its own.

Some of the key features identified in good partnerships and alliance programs are:

- Longer term commitment of partners based on mutual respect and trust.
- Common and shared vision of the problems to be tackled and the approach to be utilized.
- Transparent partnership based on effective and open communication and equitable sharing of resources and benefits.
- Flexible structure of collaboration.
- Balanced partnership where important decisions are taken with full consultation and consensus and
- Capacity building on management and negotiating skills especially regarding IPR (World Bank 2005, 18).

Forming and nurturing a successful partnership is an evolutionary process. Partnerships go through various stages during their evolution and operation. Different authors classify this evolutionary process differently. For example, Speckman et al. (1996) identified three distinct stages: the formative stage, metamorphosis, and staying the course, whereas Ojha (2002) identified five phases namely: pre-partnership phase, partnership identification, partnership negotiation, partnership implementation and post-partnership phase. Irrespective of the classification, a typical partnership process goes through a

number of key steps which are summarized in Box 1. These key steps are discussed in detail in sessions 4 and 5 of this module.

Box 1: Key steps/phases in partnering process

- Scoping—that is understanding the challenge, gathering information, consulting with stakeholders and resource providers, and building a vision.
- Identifying potential partners and motivating them.
- Building working relationships through agreed objectives and core principles.
- Planning the program of activities.
- Managing and exploring the optional long-term structure of the partnership.
- Resourcing.
- Implementing a pre-agreed work plan.
- Measuring and reporting on outputs, outcome, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact.
- Reviewing the impacts of the partnership on partners' organizations.
- Revising the partnership in the light of experience and lessons learned (reflection).
- Institutionalizing and building appropriate structure and mechanisms.

Source: Tenyson (2003).

3.2.2 Networks

Networking is a process by which two or more organizations and/or individuals collaborate to achieve common goals (Waring 1997). Theoretically, a network consists of two things: nodes and links between those nodes. In social network analysis the nodes of concern are people, groups and organizations and the links may be social contacts, exchanges of information, political influence, money, joint membership in an organization, joint participation in specific events or many other aspects of human relationships (Davies 2003).

Networks in agricultural innovation can be seen as groups of agents with restricted membership. Network members choose each other; agree explicitly to co-operate in some way and to depend on each other to some extent. Often the members aim at exchanging information and knowledge that is of limited availability; however, the members pursue individual objectives which in the context of the network are likely to result in mutual gains. The difference between partnerships and networks can be found in the different degrees with which the collaboration is formalized: partnerships are often more formal, sometimes involving written contracts and agreements, whereas networks can range from very informal to formal arrangements. In this respect, partnerships can be seen as a formal type of networks (Hartwich 2005).

Networks may be informal or formal, but the main objective is to facilitate information flows. They also build social capital, confidence and trust and create preparedness for change, lowering barriers to forming new linkages and thus have broader objectives (Hall et al. 2006).

With respect to networks, Powell (1990) elaborated the following salient points:

- Networks seek to gain from pooling resources, but involve the dependence of each party on resources controlled by others;
- They are based on the agreement to forego the right to pursue one's own specific interests at the expense of that of others;

- In their evolution, they operate through the exercise of voice rather than exit;
- Their focus is on mutual orientation and on reciprocity emphasizing indebtedness and obligation;
- They seek to build trust within a long-term perspective—operate within Axelrod's notion (1984) of 'the shadow of the future';
- The information passing through networks are 'thicker' than that obtained in markets, and 'freer' than that communicated in hierarchies;
- Finally, given the potentiality of conflict at each point of contact within the network, networking is a contentious process in which both centrifugal and centripetal forces are at work.

Networking has been in existence from the day that people began to create organizational structures. Networks and networking continue to serve as a means of sharing information for competitive and cooperative reasons among organizations and individuals with common interests. According to Creech and Willard (2001), there has been a surge of experimentation with network models for fast-tracking sustainable development in the last 10–15 years with emergence of information and communication technology being a significant driver.

Networking to support small farmer development is not a new issue. Networking has in fact received substantial attention and resources, with a mixed record of success. There have been ebbs and flows over time in the importance attached to networking. Interest now appears to be on an upswing. This is because new information and communication technologies are improving opportunities while reducing the costs of networking. Governing decentralization, adoption of ISP, growing role of farmer organizations, NGOs and private sector in the R&D are also contributing to a resurgence of interest in networking.

Interest is also increasing in developing organizational partnerships to tackle the challenges of small farmer development. Multi-organizational partnerships—based on common objectives, interactive decision-making, resource sharing and formalized reciprocal obligations—have a potential for tackling a broader range of issues at more scales of action than is possible for any organization working independently. However, the process of developing organizational partnerships supporting small farmer development is not well understood, nor is there a record of success allowing easy or quick judgment.

'Innovation networks' is a term used to capture the impetus behind the immense web of collaborative relationships created between business and non-business entities: 'Networks involve a wide range of collaborative activities including joint ventures, research corporations, joint research and development (R&D), technology research agreements (such as technology sharing, cross-licensing, mutual second-sourcing), direct investment, customer–supplier relations, R&D contracts, one-directional technology flow agreements (e.g. licensing, second-sourcing) manufacturing agreements, and so forth. Innovation networks also often involve informal collaboration and knowledge exchanges across individuals in different organizations and systemic learning...' (Okamura and Vonortas 2004)

Various other forms of networks are: information sharing networks, research networks, and special purpose networks. Networking in research suggest mainly lateral interaction—that is, interactions between organizations engaged in similar activities, although, of course, activities of different organizations may be (partially) complementary in nature. Inter-organizational learning between research institutes is an example of these types of interactions.

According to Farrington et al. (1994), a network with a sectoral (e.g. agriculture) or subsectoral (e.g. irrigation or crop processing) mandate generally operates more closely with ultimate beneficiaries (like those deriving livelihoods from agriculture) than those concerned with generic or cross-cutting themes such as methods of agricultural research or extension.

The key processes involved in a networking are summarized in Table 1. It is abundantly clear that both partnerships and networks go through a similar set of activities and processes in their genesis and successful implementation. These key steps/stages are discussed in detail in sessions 4 and 5 of this module.

Table 1. *Core processes of inter-organizational networking*

Process	Underlying questions
Network creation	How the membership of the network is defined and maintained
Decision-making	How (when, where and who) decisions are taken
Conflict resolution	How (and if) conflicts are resolved
Information processing and sharing	How information flows or is managed
Knowledge capture	How knowledge is articulated and captured to be available for the whole network.
Motivation/Commitment	How members are motivated to join/remain in the network, e.g. through active facilitation, shared concern for development etc.
Risk/benefit sharing	How the risks and benefits are shared.
Integration	How relationships are built and maintained between the individual representatives in the network.
Continuity and sustainability	What mechanisms are put in place to ensure continuity and sustainability

Source: Rothwell (1992).

3.3 Why partnerships?

As identified by a number of reviewers and practitioners, partnership offers a number of advantages. These include: offering greater capacity, cost effectiveness, sustainability, addressing complex issues of common interest/concern, larger area coverage, educating stakeholders, reinforcement, reaching vulnerable groups, sharing and learning of new competence, avoiding duplication and overlap, complementarity of resources and skills, leveraging scarce resources, creating wealth and increased flow of information and knowledge Ojha (2002). Agter and Hage (1993) argued that four conditions are necessary (but not sufficient) for collaboration among two or more institutes: willingness to collaborate, a need for expertise, a need for financial resources and a need for adaptive efficiencies. The most important pre-condition is the willingness to collaborate.

Primarily organizations enter into partnership because this would increase the organization's potential to achieve its objectives. In other words, partnership decisions are strategic decisions that organizations make in order to fulfil their mission. Rangan and Yashiro (1996) argued that institutes enter into partnerships for four reasons: to add value to activity, to augment competencies by learning from partners, to ensure continuous strategic flexibility and to avoid appropriation by a partner of its core competencies or strategic advantage. The most common reasons given for forming alliances and partnerships are: to expand capabilities, allowing organizations to do more with less or to do something different from what their resource base permits; to leverage resources and have convenient access to other specialized resources; to expand geographically into other parts of the world; and to facilitate learning.

Partnerships help to improve an organization's potential to achieve its strategic objectives through various avenues:

- Mobilizing and augmenting resources
Entering into partnership helps organizations mobilize additional resources and enhance the potential of the organizations' own resources to generate impact. Information, human capital, material, equipment (physical capital), technology and management are some of the resources that are frequently acquired or accessed through partnerships.
- Augmenting competencies
Each organization has one or a set of core competencies i.e. very good in doing some tasks. When a new task requires additional competencies, which are not available in the institute, one solution is to obtain the needed competency through partnership with another organization. By pooling complementary know-how and skills both organizations gain. Problems to be solved by agricultural research are by nature very complex to be solved by one discipline, sector or organization.
- Augmenting markets
In business ventures, co-operative arrangements often result in bigger market share, taking advantage of established brand names and territorial dominance. Faster entry into new markets and quick pay back are some key strategic advantages. In the case of R&D this deals with the coverage of larger geographical areas/regions.
- Increasing the scale of activities
When two organizations engage in similar businesses through partnership, both could benefit from economies of scale. This may result in lower average costs and increased output by exploiting the synergy generated by relying on comparative advantage of each partner.
- Enhancing strategic flexibility
This is often a secondary reason for an organization to enter into partnership. Augmenting resources, competencies or markets simply expands the range of strategic options available for an institute. An expanded set of options at a point in time also makes it possible for the organization to consider subsequent strategic moves which would not have been possible without the partnership.
- Reducing duplication
Working together can help reduce the chances of duplication of effort.
- Increasing service integration
The impact of research activities is often increased by working with the farmer in an integrated manner in which the farmers' needs are considered in a holistic way. Partnering can help achieve a better integration of services offered to resource-poor farmers.
- Improving access to the end users
Getting research results into the hands of farmers in ways that encourage appropriate behavioural change has always been difficult. Partnering can help connect researchers and farmers in ways that strengthen results.
- Expanding capabilities
In these days of limited and diminishing resources, partnering can allow organizations to do more with less or to do something entirely different from what their existing resource base permits.
- Increasing learning
Often people talk about learning organizations. More and more institutes and individuals are seeking to learn from one another and from others involved in improving agricultural productivity

NRM and contributing to the developmental impacts. Creating opportunities for learning and strengthening the NIS are important mandates of institutes engaged in Agricultural R&D.

- Improving access to donor resources

Donors often insist on broader partnerships in agricultural R&D. One of the criteria for selecting projects partnership can improve an organizations' ability to compete.

Partnerships and networks can improve the development and delivery of innovations that directly affect the livelihoods of resource-poor or vulnerable households if structured appropriately. Challenges of today's complex society are such that individual agencies and programs cannot succeed in delivering results on their own any longer. A collaborative effort that reaches across agencies, across levels of government, and across the public, nonprofit, and private sectors is needed to achieve results. The key tools for doing this are partnerships and networks. Communities are built on connections and better connections create an economic opportunity (Krebs et al, 2002).

Several recent studies illustrate the need for partnerships and networks to support the development and delivery of agricultural innovation. Studies of agro-industrial firms and agro-industrial opportunities, for instance, suggests that there is high demand for technologies to enhance the quality of value-added agricultural processing, for new marketable products, and for institutional and infrastructural improvement to enhance supply chain efficiency (Hall and Yogandand 2002; Chema et al. 2003). To meet these demands, the studies recommend further investment in partnerships and networks to improve strategic managerial and institutional capacity in the agricultural sector (ASARECA 2003; NARO 2003).

The overriding rationale for networks in agricultural research and innovation is the interdependence among organizations which enables mutual reliance upon one another to accomplish their joint goal as well as their individual objectives. The potential for synergy within networks enables actors to achieve more through co-operation than they would if they were alone. Knowledge creation through networks may better respond to the demands of agriculture in developing countries, which is characteristically riddled with complexity, uncertainty and risks (Chambers et al. 1989).

Different studies indicate that it is worth investing in networking of different actors in the society because their contribution to learning and innovation for sustainable development is tremendous. Moreover weak linkages among research, education and extension institutes result in systematic bottlenecks in national agricultural technology systems and limit their effectiveness to contribute to development (Crowder et al. 1997). Increased number of players entering the field is evidence that a synergy would be created by working in partnership (Biggs 1989).

Networking is also a means of giving greater regional, national or international impacts to the activities of community-based organizations. There is evidence to suggest that partnerships and networks are playing an increasingly important role in addressing global issues such as health, environment, finance and governance (World Bank 2002; UNF/WFE 2003). In the international agricultural R&D community, there is a similar interest in promoting greater collaboration among diverse actors in the sector, including key international organizations (CGIAR 1998; GFAR 2003; World Bank 2003), leading agricultural research firms (Barry and Horsch 2000; Shear 2000; Richer and Simon 2000), and non-governmental organizations engaged in agricultural science and technology (James 1996).

3.4 Factors contributing to increased use of partnerships and networks within agricultural R&D

Increasingly the challenge facing many organizations is to operate not in 'splendid isolation' but in relationship with others. Inter-organizational networking is becoming an issue of considerable interest amongst researchers, policymakers and development practitioners. Here, we deal with 'collective efficiency' as opposed to the efficiency and effectiveness of individual members.

Partnerships and alliances are hot topics in every major sector of business today. Without exception, private, public, academic and non-profit organizations are embracing the strategic mandate of collaboration. Partnerships are found extensively, both domestically and internationally, and on a local or national level. The use of partnerships to accomplish strategic and operational goals within the agricultural R&D arena has risen substantially over the last two decades. A number of factors contributed to the proliferation of partnerships and networks. This section briefly outlines these factors.

- Changing paradigms in R&D arena

Currently the R&D process is guided by four complementary but mutually reinforcing concepts: Innovation systems perspective, value chain approach, research for development and impact orientation. Managing innovation has become one of the key strategic tasks facing organizations of all shapes, sizes and sectors. Although technical innovations are important, so are organizational, managerial, institutional, service delivery and policy innovations. Partnerships that promote innovation are thus not only concerned with frontier research and technology but also concerned with incremental problem solving i.e., continuous process of minor adjustments and improvements that farmers and firms (institutes) make to survive, improve profits, and compete with other farmers and firms domestically and internationally, (Hall 2006). The emerging paradigms in agricultural research and development scene are rooted in participatory approaches and partnership amongst the various stakeholders/actors.

- Increased use of system concepts and participatory research methods

The evolution of systems thinking and participatory approaches (from farming systems research to participatory research methods to IAR4D and innovation system perspective) have changed the power relationships in decision-making and resource allocation. One of the most notable trends in development research over the past thirty years has been the move towards more multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research. The movement has also contributed to the participation of stakeholders from diverse spectrum in the R&D processes within the agricultural sector.

Within the agricultural research and development arena, innovation systems have become increasingly complex. From 1960s onward, the traditional thoughts have been that S&T involves three inter-related actors—infrastructure, production structure and government policies for S&T. A current model of innovation system, however, must also include at least seven other types of actors—the financial system, technology brokers, industry and professions associations, the legal/institutional base, non-governmental organizations, media, public opinion and regional and international co-operation structures (Plonski 2000). Without adequate development and interactions of these actors and organizations in domestic and regional setting, the innovation structure remains under developed, weak, and inefficient.

- Increased complexity of developmental challenges and changed expectations

Over the years, the goal of agricultural research has broadened from an initial narrow focus on near term technologies to increased food production and productivity gains to incorporate a much larger agenda that includes environmental sustainability, poverty alleviation and social inclusion. The

complex and multifaceted nature of these problems and the diverse needs and interests of the society at large demanded expertise beyond the scope of an individual organization or group of actors. This has necessitated the pooling of resources and the need for working together.

The developmental challenges are increasingly complex calling for multidisciplinary multistakeholder participation. Furthermore, downsizing and reengineering (largely through economic structural adjustment program) of R&D organizations has created leaner organizations focusing on core competencies thus lacking in the broader technical capabilities outside their primary mission and mandate.

- Increased competition

In many cases, the mere survival of organizations due to their inability to face complexities brought about by globalization, hyper-competition and deregulations have forced them to form strategic alliances and partnerships. Kogut (1988) emphasized the role of competition and observes that competitor incentives are important for both the formation and termination of joint ventures. It has been argued that vulnerability in market conditions and fear of competition provide the seed for co-operative ventures.

- Globalization of agricultural R&D and the changing organizational landscape

In the recent past, there is a trend towards globalization of agricultural research. Drivers of globalization of R&D are decrease in global investments (leading to clear roles and responsibilities); growing markets for agricultural products, agricultural inputs, new technologies, improved ability to appropriate the gains from innovations, improved policy environment for foreign investments and technology transfer; and growth in demand due to increased income and policy changes.

There is also growing awareness that a number of sectors such as agriculture, health, education, water and energy are very closely linked. Thus the agenda for agricultural transformation should follow a multisectoral approach to capture the synergies and complementarities. In addition there are also a number of continental and regional bodies to co-ordinate agricultural R&D.

A reorganization of the global agricultural research systems to include stakeholders such as farmer organizations, civil society organizations, NGOs and private sector also calls for greater collaboration.

- Emerging technologies—especially information technology and biotechnology

The information communications technology revolution has made the exchange of information across boundaries easier and the increasing prominence of biotechnologies that call for new competencies not always available in one institute.

Biotechnology is a highly technical field, which typically requires high initial investments for building the necessary human capital and infrastructure including laboratories and green houses for risk assessment and identification genetically modified organization. Thus, a number of countries and institutes have opted to work in collaboration to derive the benefits of the emerging gene revolution.

- Redefining role of government and increased emphasis on privatization of public services

Over the last two decades, the policy and institutional context within which agricultural research and innovation occurs have changed dramatically. The reform agenda within the R&D arena include: redefinition of the role of government in agricultural R&D, decentralization/ privatization of agricultural R&D activities, broader and active stakeholder participation and pluralism in service provision, networks

and partnerships and new funding arrangement. Another key feature is the separation of financing from service provision and research executions. These changes provide increased opportunities for public, private and third party (such as civil society, farmer organizations and NGOs) collaboration and partnership.

Presentation of adequate legal frameworks and mechanisms for sharing benefits also contributed to increased private sector participation in agricultural R&D activities.

- Changing funding scenario and funding arrangements

The growth in agricultural research investments was very rapid in the 1970s and slowed down since the mid 1980. While the available R&D resources are declining, there has been a universal move towards the use of competitive funding for research. One of the criteria for selecting successful project is the multi-organizational, multistakeholder partnerships in the design and implementation of projects. There is an increasing demand from donors for regional alliances and partnerships.

- Increased anecdotal evidence of socio-economic benefits of co-operation.

There is growing realization that individual institutes and group of actors have limited capacity to address the multifaceted developmental challenges. It has been argued that the total value of the partnership efforts is greater than the sum of the values derived from individual efforts. This is basically the economic rationale behind partnership formation. Although the available evidence is mostly advocacy type, comprehensive studies of partnership process and benefits are still very limited.

3.5 Factors enhancing and hindering impacts of partnership

Although partnership and networks are gaining grounds in recent past in agricultural research for development, partnership has been a common phenomenon in the R&D arena in the other sectors for a considerable period of time. Over the years number of systematic reviews have been conducted (NCHRP 2001; Atkinson 2005; Masselli et al. 2006; Bradley 2007a, b) to identify the factors that enhance as well as hinder the aspects of partnership. This knowledge will assist a great deal in the design and management of effective research partnership and are presented in this section.

3.5.1 Factors enhancing impacts of partnership

- Direct contact with community

This helps create relationships with people and among research teams, change attitudes and trigger changes in behaviour. The contact with people also includes feedback exercises, and this results not only in validation of findings but also in follow-up for capacity building, analysis and action at community level.

- A forum for regular meeting and sharing experiences

This forum provides a space for researchers to share their research methods, approaches, findings and conclusions and for the partners to make plans for sharing these with the research and development community outside the research project.

- Plan for impact

In collaborative research projects, aspects related to domains such as capacity building and impact beyond scientific findings are important. But these are often neglected or completely overlooked. Planning for impact requires active inclusion of all concerned stakeholders and joint thinking about

desired and undesired project impacts. Unless the desired impacts are clearly spelled out, discussed, negotiated, agreed upon, and planned at the beginning they are unlikely to materialize and the undesired effects cannot be mitigated effectively.

- Monitor and evaluate impact

A M&E system looking beyond the output has to be developed as part of design and implementation. Impact monitoring helps to learn, reflect and adjust to improve the performance of all stakeholders involved (Hagmann et al. 2002). Stakeholder perceptions and expectations may vary. Participating impact assessment provides an opportunity for these different views, judgments and observations to come to the surface.

For each partnership project, an appropriate M&E system allowing to assess work in progress and to take corrective measures, if necessary, should be jointly developed at an early stage. There must be a strong commitment to make proper use of this M&E system by all those concerned.

- Making resources available—earmarked resources for IA

Even if effectively integrated, resources are needed to facilitate and evaluate impacts within a project. Impact should not be considered as a byproduct of research; it is the ultimate goal of conducting research.

- Commitment, competence, continuity and complementarity (4Cs)

Commitment and competence of involved research partners are crucial to the success of a partnership project. Equally the continuity of the commitment and the complementarity of the partners allow for long-term collaboration.

- Mobilize local support for local sustainability

Developmental impacts take time to realize. Therefore, it may be necessary to include some long-term support for responsible institutions to implant and follow up.

- Promoting, participatory, transdisciplinary, multilevel, multistakeholder and gender sensitive approaches

This is crucial for development-oriented research. It allows non-scientific actors to become active partners in the research projects. The diversity of perspectives stemming from different scientific disciplines as well as different representatives of the society helps balance values and ideologies. Through this collaboration, mutual learning process can be generated which may lead to a change in understanding, in attitude and finally behaviour.

- Incentives

To maintain or enhance the motivation and integrity of all partners and individuals involved, appropriate planning of incentives is crucial.

Incentives can be in the form of extra remuneration, free lunch/snacks, invitation to meetings, participation in meetings, overseas trips to attend professional meetings, and support for joint publications.

- Communication, dissemination and feedback strategies and skills

Effective communication and dissemination of results facilitates the achievement of desired impacts. There is a need for a clear-cut communication and dissemination strategy before, during and after the project. This strategy should cater for the needs and levels of different stakeholder groups and

audiences such as policymakers, the research community, the development community and (society at large) the user community. Appropriate feedback mechanisms have to be developed in order to satisfy the expectations of the targeted end-users. Creating mutual learning platforms are very useful.

- Documentation

Proper documentation is recommended to track the research for development process as a basis for mutual learning and self-evaluation with respect to improve the collaboration/performance in the future. Safe storage and maintenance of data and information collected during the process is vital to avoid delicate situations such as changes in personnel.

Each project has to develop jointly an appropriate reporting, documentation and communication strategy including an action plan in a proactive and transparent manner.

- Speaking the right language

Making an impact at different levels requires speaking the language of those that one seeks to influence. e.g. language of researchers, language of farmers, language of policymakers etc.

3.5.2 Factors hindering impacts of partnership

The following factors have been found to have had a negative impact on partnership.

- Expert attitude and competition

The competition between different researchers often results in inadequate support for innovative and new approaches from within the forum. The expert attitude inhibited researchers from relating to others. Thus engaging in one another's research was very limited.

- Fears and orientations

Fears, anxieties and prior orientations limit not only the formation of deeper partnerships, but also influence the opinions that one researcher held of another's research. Emotionally moving experiences were recognized as powerful change agents, and as positive influence both in research and development.

- Discontinuity

Stop and go policies, abrupt changes, or discontinuity of support due to policy changes, or instability of government could have a significant effect on the success of the project and the planned impact.

It may be useful to think about this in advance so that provision is made for decent termination of the collaboration. It is also worth noting that no legal recourse is possible in official national or international development co-operation commitment.

- Inflexibility of funding

Funding arrangements with rigid disbursement regulations hinder meaningful and flexible use of funds for the project duration.

Year to year carry over, adaptation between line items must be allowed or responding to emerging needs.

- Lack of internal information and communication (skills)

Sound knowledge of the project, its context, expected output and impacts is a fundamental pre-requisite of every partner in the process. Effort should be undertaken to maintain communication at all levels:

- Funding agency and researchers
- Researchers and end users
- Researchers of the various organizations (N–S; S–S).
- Internal tensions and conflicts

Conflict may arise due to disparities, imbalanced power distribution or budget allocation between institutes. Some of these disparities are unavoidable and need to be discussed, classified and made transparent. Compensation mechanism (national vs. international; North vs. South), cultural gaps, hierarchical positions, unclear roles and competencies required may cause international tensions and conflicts among the partners.

- Prejudices and mindsets

Some individuals are predisposed to some prejudices and have a fixed mindset. Lack of flexibility and unwillingness to change/reluctance to change may cause problems in partnership and hinder the achievement of desired impact. Inter-organizational bias especially in situations where partnerships involved research academic institutes, private sector and NGOs can affect the performance negatively.

- Overambitious project design

Increasing competition for research funds frequently leads to overambitious project designs with overly optimistic timing, overloaded activity plans etc. The consequences of such a design are that the expectations are not met. Commitments to the funding agencies and the end users cannot be fulfilled. This in turn leads to mutual deception and frustration, not only hampering successful project performance but often also leading to reduced commitment among all stakeholders involved, and even to negative impacts.

- Overcommitted partner staff

In many instances, one could observe that the staff resources have declined without corresponding decline in work load. These heavy workloads often lead to difficulties in maintaining partner accountability for work commitments and work quality.

- Insufficient support for partnership

Management may agree to new partnership anticipating additional resources, visibility and/or recognition. Very often commitments are made by individuals and senior and middle level managers to partnerships without realizing the implications of integrating these new partnerships into the existing portfolio of activities of the organization. As a result, the individuals and management may fail to give the required support. Leaders may find themselves ignoring these new partnerships rather than nurturing and supporting them.

- Lack of attention to the process of building the partnership and trust

Given the declining resources organizations often compete for resources, for visibility and for recognition. This survival strategy can endanger the trust needed for collaborative processes.

Partnerships often work better when all partners are equal in access to resources and staff skills and knowledge. Very often we find that the staff working in NARES and NGOs are paid much less than their counterparts in the CG systems and advanced institutes leading to feelings of unfairness and resentment that may be difficult for the partnership to overcome.

Often under the pressure of hectic schedules, partnerships immediately focus on the work tasks and neglect to spend time explaining how partners will work together.

- Lack of partnership and alliance competencies

Most staff in research partnerships are scientists or have been trained in technical subject matter areas. Often they may lack the skills and expertise required to manage and nurture partnership.

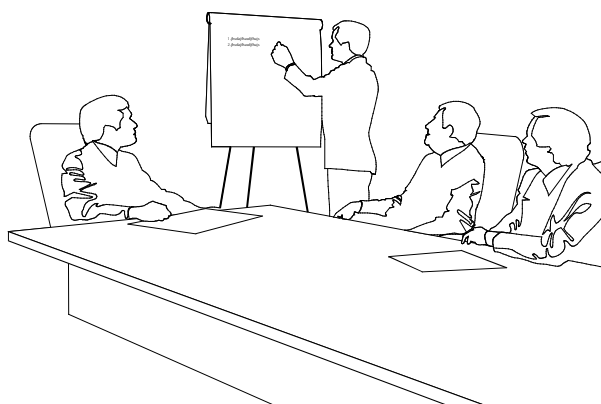
Paying attention to these factors during the design and implementation of partnership project will significantly enhance the impacts of collaborative research projects.

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Session 3: Exercise: Discussing the purpose of partnership in agricultural research for development

(Plenary session)



Plenary discussion (15 minutes)

While the facilitator makes the presentation, think about responding to the following questions:

- a. Have you ever been involved in partnership? If yes, what kind of partnership? What was the motivation for establishing partnership?
- b. Were your expectations met? Explain _____

