



PAEPARD



Strengthening Capacity for Agricultural Research for Development: Collaboration for Results



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Executive summary

The Platform for African-European Partnerships in Agricultural Research for Development (PAEPARD) was launched in 2009 to mobilize African and European stakeholders, and strengthen their capacity to finance and undertake agricultural research for development (ARD). The present paper revisits the steps and interventions taken by PAEPARD to promote the formation of multi-stakeholder partnerships for ARD and strengthen their capacity to implement changes.

The paper takes a critical look at two key interventions identified to deliver the PAEPARD capacity strengthening strategy. Firstly, the training of a pool of agricultural innovation facilitators (AIF) to broker relations between relevant stakeholders for the consolidation of effective consortia. PAEPARD envisaged the role of AIF as to support both the face-to-face and

virtual (via skype, email or social media) engagement of partners in capacity strengthening processes.

The second key capacity strengthening intervention examined in this paper, is the instrument of “writeshop” to support consortia to produce “bankable” proposals in response to identified funding opportunities.

In assessing the merits and limitations of these interventions, among other capacity strengthening activities promoted by PAEPARD, the paper highlights that capacity strengthening should be understood as an iterative process, which must be able to adapt to the changing needs of partnerships as they develop. To conclude, the paper presents the primary lessons learned from the challenges and successes of PAEPARD capacity strengthening interventions, which will inform future ARD initiatives and funding mechanisms.



list of acronyms

AIF: Agricultural innovation facilitators
ARD: Agricultural research for development
COLEACP: Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee
CRF: Competitive Research Fund
EAFF: East Africa Farmers Federation
EU: European Union
FANRPAN: The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network
FARA: Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa
IF: Incentive Fund
MSHRQ: Multi-stakeholder research question
NGOs: Non-governmental organizations

PAEPARD: Platform for African-European Partnerships in Agricultural Research for Development
PAFO: Pan-African Farmers' Organization
PROPAC: Sub-regional Platform of Central Africa Farmers' Organizations
ROPFA: Network of Farmers' and Producers' Organizations of West Africa
RUFORUM: Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture
SACAU: Southern African Confederation of Unions
SME: Small or medium-sized enterprises
ULP: Users-led process
WP: Work package



table of contents

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING IN AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT (ARD)	4
. PAEPARD	4
. Capacity strengthening for ARD	4
. Developing a capacity strengthening strategy	5

DEVELOPING THE CAPACITY OF PARTNERSHIPS	8
. Mobilizing PAEPARD consortia	9
. Consolidating multi-stakeholder partnerships	10

DEVELOPING THE CAPACITY OF AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION FACILITATORS	11
. Agricultural innovation facilitators in PAEPARD	11
. Selecting and inducting agricultural innovation facilitators	12
. AIF experience in brokering and facilitating partnerships	13

DEVELOPING CAPACITY TO FORMULATE RESEARCH PROPOSALS	14
. Proposal development	14
. PAEPARD seed funding	15
. Outcomes of PAEPARD support for ARD proposal development and implementation	15

CONSOLIDATING LEARNING (REFLECTION AND LEARNING WORKSHOPS)	17
. Initial reflection workshop	17
. Defining PAEPARD pathways of change	18
. Review and capitalization workshop	19
. Lessons learned from reflection events	20

PAEPARD LESSONS ON CAPACITY STRENGTHENING OF MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS FOR ARD	20
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CONCLUSIONS	23
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Capacity strengthening in agricultural research for development

Agricultural research for development (ARD) is widely understood as a framework that recognizes the range of research and non-research stakeholders, from both public and private organizations, involved in the process of creating, adapting and leveraging information and technology for socioeconomic development. ARD requires adaptive capacities for a continuous process of technological, institutional and policy learning and innovation. Several studies (including Rees *et al.*, 2004; Lynam & Elliot, 2004; and Daane, 2010)¹ have unpacked the adaptive capacities associated with ARD. Such capacities include the ability of different stakeholders to jointly learn from each other and benefit from their diverse competencies to find adequate solutions, which add value and go beyond the potential of their individual contributions. The Platform for African-European Partnerships in Agricultural Research for Development (PAEPARD) was designed to nurture the adaptive capacities of multi-stakeholder partnerships for ARD.

PAEPARD

PAEPARD was established in 2009 with support from the Directorate-General for International Cooperation

and Development of the European Commission. Its objective is to build joint African-European multi-stakeholder partnerships in ARD, which contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals². PAEPARD aims to achieve this by mobilizing relevant stakeholders and increasing their capacity to finance and undertake ARD. In particular, PAEPARD focuses on strengthening the capacity of African stakeholders to compete for and access available ARD funding opportunities, as well as strengthening the capacity of “non-research stakeholders” (such as farmer organizations, private sector companies and NGOs) to participate as equal partners. Stakeholders in the ARD process are facilitated through innovation networks, as well as brokering, facilitation, mentoring and training support, to establish effective ARD partnerships, articulate innovation needs, develop research project proposals, and improve negotiation, project management and financial management skills.

Capacity strengthening for ARD

PAEPARD promotes an integrated ARD approach, adopted by the Forum of Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) in 2003 to address the complexity of the agricultural system. This integrated approach emphasises the need to bring together different research disciplines from related fields, as well as multiple actors (including private and public sector stakeholders, producer organizations and policy makers), to find joint solutions to agricultural innovation challenges³. ARD demands a continuous, interactive process of social and experiential learning among these multiple actors, leading to the

co-creation of knowledge. The process of building strong stakeholder relations based on commitment and trust is often as important as the specific solutions to research and development challenges⁴. Thus, the multi-stakeholder ARD partnerships promoted by PAEPARD add value to research and development processes, not only by achieving technology and policy outputs, but also through focusing on improving the capacities of all partners.

Within the context of ARD, capacity strengthening is seen as a process of continual development, as opposed to one-off training. It enhances interaction, builds trust and creates synergy between research institutions and public and private sector actors, smallholder farmers and development organizations. Strengthening the capacities of these different actors for collaboration enables them to address a whole range of activities, investments and policies, and take advantage of opportunities to make change happen. Capacity strengthening takes place concurrently at individual, organizational and institutional levels in an integrated fashion, with each level influencing the other – “the strength of each depending on, and determining the strength of the others”⁵.

At an individual level, capacity strengthening focuses on building competencies in meta-disciplines (systems thinking, knowledge management, strategic planning and the use of information and communications technology), in social skills (communication, teamwork, networking and facilitation) and on changing mind-sets (addressing empathy, self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation and social awareness). At an organizational level, there is a need for performance and incentive systems that encourage inter-disciplinary teamwork and partnerships with other stakeholders, as well as institutional structures that support mutual learning and effective knowledge management. Impact assessments that go beyond measuring economic returns to include a broader evaluation of the achieved behavioural change also need to be put in place. At an institutional (system-wide) level, capacity needs to be developed to allow different stakeholders (individuals and organizations from the public and private sectors) to come together on a level playing field and create an enabling environment for multi-stakeholder ARD collaboration.

PAEPARD has engaged several consortia and farmer-based organizations (end-users) in ARD over the last 8 years. From these engagements, PAEPARD experience clearly demonstrates that strengthening the capacities



of multi-stakeholder partnerships for ARD requires more time than commonly envisaged. This is especially the case because the capacity needs of partnerships change over time as they face emerging challenges or acquire new insights. Early capacity strengthening efforts may be concentrated around identifying and accessing funding opportunities. Whilst consortia that have accessed funding, need capacity strengthening efforts to focus on the research topic and scientific discovery. When a partnership moves to addressing market linkages for research outputs and widening the scope of the stakeholders involved, new challenges related to project management, value chain analysis and trust building begin to become more central to its effective functioning.

Recognizing the need to ensure that capacity strengthening activities are flexible and able to adapt to the changing demands of stakeholders within the partnerships, moments for reflection and (re-) prioritization of the consortia’s capacity needs were created during the implementation process.

Developing a capacity strengthening strategy

Strengthening the capacities of multi-stakeholder partnerships is core to PAEPARD success and key to an effective ARD approach. To develop capacity strengthening interventions, an initial desk study was undertaken by PAEPARD⁶. A team of five, representing the different PAEPARD partners, carried out this desk study over 2 months in 2011. The results were then presented at a broader PAEPARD strategy and planning workshop. The study included a review of:

¹ Rees, D., Osiru, M. and Nampala, P. 2004. Integrated Agricultural Research for Development – Achievements, Lessons Learnt and Best Practice; Daane, J. 2010. Enhancing performance of agricultural innovation systems. Rural Development News, 1:76-82; Lynam, J. and Elliot, M. 2004. Organizing agricultural research: fitting institutional structure to the Research Agenda. In: Transformation of Agricultural Research Systems in Africa: Lessons from Kenya, Ndutu, C., Lynam, J. and Mbabu, A.N. (eds.). Michigan State University Press.

² The Millennium Development Goals that guided development efforts at the time of PAEPARD inception were further developed and replaced with the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015.

³ Hawkins, R., Heemskerk, W., Booth, R., Daane, J., Maatman, A. and Adekunle, A.A. 2009. Integrated Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D). A Concept Paper for the FARA Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Programme (SSA CP). FARA, Accra, Ghana.

⁴ Fatunbi, O., Ekong, J., Dhamankar, M. and Adekunle, A. 2017. Integrated Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D): Revisiting Concept, Practice and Upscaling. FARA, Accra, Ghana.

⁵ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2011. Capacity Development: A UNDP Primer. UNDP, Bureau for Development Policy, Capacity Development Group, New York, USA.

⁶ Hawkins, R., Kibwika, P., Nampala, P., Madzivhandila, T., Kamau, M. and Hillocks, R. 2011. A strategy to enhance the capacity of stakeholders in Africa and Europe to jointly implement agricultural research for development, PAEPARD.



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- The literature on research partnerships and their capacity development needs;
- Recent ARD projects and their capacity development approaches;
- Multi-stakeholder consultations undertaken by PAEPARD in Europe and Africa during 2010 and 2011.

The literature review identified the desirable characteristics of individuals, organizations and an enabling environment for multi-stakeholder research partnerships, and suggested that capacity strengthening for such partnerships should focus:

- At the *partner* (individual) level, on motivating and providing incentives to adapt an ARD approach, fostering strong leadership, improving relevant skills (systems thinking, strategic planning, communication etc.), and building and maintaining relationships so that partners can collaborate and learn from each other;
- At the *relational* (organizational or network) level, on building the linkages, partnerships and networks that enable innovating agents to operate efficiently and effectively by enhancing communication, negotiation and conflict resolution skills, as well as ensuring the development of social capital and trust;
- At the *system* level (institutional), on developing the capacity of decision makers, including policy makers, as a foundation for improving the macro-institutions, structures, policies and regulations that support the actions and interactions of innovating agents.

The review of multi-stakeholder consultations in both Africa and Europe, in October 2010 and May 2011, also produced a broad list of capacity needs. Both African and European stakeholders

stressed the need for multi-stakeholder partnership development and management support; market research and the development of market linkages; efficient communication (both within and between partnerships); resource mobilization; and monitoring and evaluation systems. African stakeholders tended to focus on the partners' general knowledge of technical or policy areas, whereas the European stakeholders were more focused on the specific needs of the European Union (EU). Given this broad panorama of needs, it was not immediately clear how all of these elements might be adequately addressed by PAEPARD.

> Addressing key challenges

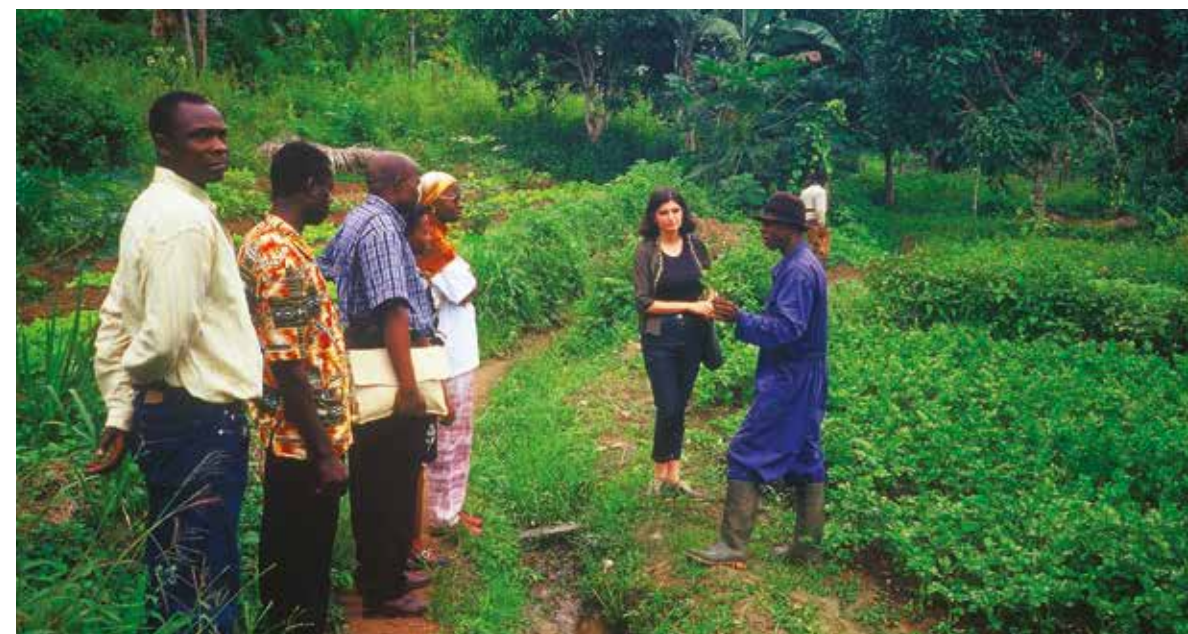
The question therefore, remained as to how best to develop capacities in the identified areas at the various different levels. Most ARD projects that were reviewed relied on participatory training workshops, with innovative learning mechanisms described as "action learning", "learning by doing" and "guided learning". The common feature of these approaches was their iterative nature, with participants returning several times to a workshop environment to modify their plans or ideas based on the experience they had gained through project implementation since a previous learning event. Fundamental to this approach was the role of the facilitator, who guided the learning process.

PAEPARD faced several challenges in developing and implementing a capacity strengthening strategy informed by the issues raised in the desk review and multi-stakeholder consultations, as well as observations during implementation of the strategy:

- Capacity strengthening needed to be embedded in the broader PAEPARD strategy, which often lacked clarity and was difficult to communicate to organizations engaging with the project;
- The need for brokers and facilitators to support partnership development was evident, but it was unclear whether these roles could or should be combined. Although the project did come to combine the roles under the responsibility of agricultural innovation facilitators (AIF), the distinction between the role of AIF and project leaders or project coordinators increasingly became an issue;
- NGOs believed that they were in a good position to offer "brokerage" services for the partnership building and research innovation processes. However, it remained unclear how AIF would be identified (whether they should be internal or external to the partnership) and what their incentive for participation would be, as payment from PAEPARD project resources was considered unsustainable in the longer term;

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Field visits contribute to better dialogue and partnership between farmers and scientists. Yaoundé periurban area, Cameroon.



- Farmers' organizations maintained that they should be responsible for the articulation of research demands. Yet, the research themes suggested at the initial multi-stakeholder workshops were too general to provide a reference for building research consortia.

> An emergent capacity strengthening strategy

The desk study team concluded that the main elements of a PAEPARD strategy for capacity strengthening should include:

- Capacity strengthening activities on three levels: at the level of individual partners, at the research consortia level, and on a policy and advocacy level to help create an enabling environment for multi-stakeholder partnership for ARD;
- Support to the main elements of the PAEPARD strategy already identified through "partnership inception" and "proposal development" workshops;
- The development of a core group of AIF to facilitate interaction and trust building within the partnerships. PAEPARD support to the AIF covered:
 - initial workshops to explore their role and responsibilities;
 - development of information systems (e.g., to identify suitable funding sources) for the partnerships;
 - technical and administrative backstopping to enable them to design, plan and implement inception workshops among the consortia partners and proposal development workshops (writeshops);
 - review workshops to consolidate lessons learned;
 - additional training on brokerage/facilitation of multi-stakeholder processes, through existing short courses in Europe or tailor-made courses in Africa;

- Specific support to farmer organizations and small or medium-sized enterprises (SME) or associations in Africa, to enable them to enter into partnerships on a more equitable basis. Proposed activities included strengthening the ability of farmer organizations to translate their concerns into research questions so that they had a better understanding of what they could expect and demand from research.

At the same time, the desk review team recognized that building the capacity of a few ARD stakeholders could only deliver short-term gains in terms of increasing African research and non-research stakeholders' participation in successful proposals responding to EU research calls. Sustainable change towards more equitable multi-stakeholder ARD approaches required much broader organizational and institutional change, as well as the development of more enabling policies. The overall pathways and institutional arrangements for articulating ARD demands were weak or lacking in sub-Saharan Africa. Whilst capacity strengthening activities could address some of these issues, much more needed to be done to institutionalize participatory needs assessments and establish sustainable demand articulation pathways in agricultural innovation systems.

The paper will outline how PAEPARD implemented an integrated and continual approach to capacity strengthening at all levels of the project to facilitate the establishment of sustainable multi-stakeholder partnerships for ARD and highlight the challenges that were encountered in this process.



Role playing is often used by socio-economists to break the barriers between research and small scale farming. Cameroon.

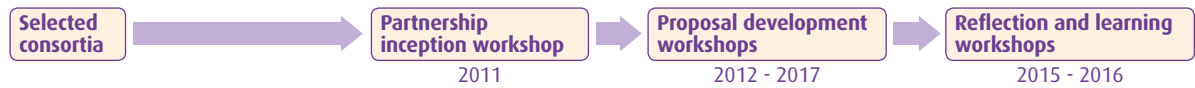
Developing the capacity of partnerships

The PAEPARD capacity strengthening strategy was designed to support development of consortia from their initial selection to the acquisition of funding and implementation of research outcomes. The initial partnership building process entailed the selection of consortia through a competitive ARD call issued by PAEPARD in 2010; an inception workshop to develop the consortia's research theme and their understanding of ARD; the distribution of roles and responsibilities within the consortium; proposal development workshops (writeshops); and reflection and learning workshops.

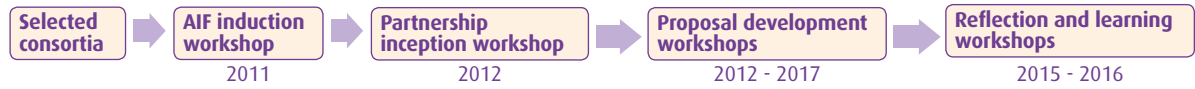
A similar process was followed in the formation of consortia from a second call issued by PAEPARD in 2011 and for the users-led process (ULP) that followed. However, in these cases, an additional step involving an AIF induction workshop was included. Rather than having partnership inception workshops, the ULP consortia were organized through workshops intended to come to a joint agreement on the multi-stakeholder research question (MSHRQ) to be addressed.

This process was meant to integrate the perceived research needs of the various stakeholders involved and place farmer organizations at the heart of partnership development. The main steps in the formation and implementation of consortia from each process are illustrated in Figure 1.

CALL 1: 9 Consortia



CALL 2: 10 Consortia



ULP: 5 Consortia



Figure 1: PAEPARD consortia development (AIF: Agricultural innovation facilitator; MSHRQ: multi-stakeholder research question).

Mobilizing PAEPARD consortia

PAEPARD used a competitive calls approach to select partnerships. The main goal of the two PAEPARD competitive calls was to establish multi-stakeholder partnerships for ARD proposals, which address the needs of a specific value chain and involve a variety of research and non-research partners from both Africa and Europe. Out of a total of 151 concept notes submitted to PAEPARD (82 in 2010 and 69 in 2011), 19 consortia were selected. The selection criteria included a research approach that focused on addressing the needs of a specific value chain and the involvement of multi-stakeholder partners suited to engaging in various activities along the selected value chain. An overview of the selected consortia, as well as the selected ULP consortia, is available from <https://paepard.org/>. Selected consortia were awarded a grant as seed funding to support partnership formation and the generation of ideas for project proposal development.

> Consortia from the 1st and 2nd calls

Following the 1st call in 2010, nine partnerships (involving 48 different partner organizations) were selected for PAEPARD support. ICRA and the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) facilitated three partnership inception workshops in Nairobi, Lomé, and Pretoria, between June and August 2011 to lay a foundation for these partnerships. Ten consortia involving various partner organizations were selected for the 2nd call in 2011 and the inception workshops were co-facilitated by AIF. The objective of these partnership inception workshops was to guide the proposed consortia

to further explore the research issue that they had identified and develop an action plan. At these workshops the key principles for the creation of a working partnership were agreed and the roles, responsibilities and commitments of the different partners clearly defined.

Through the workshops, the consortium partners were expected to produce the following immediate results:

- A shared analysis of the core challenge identified by the non-research partners;
- A consensus on what the partners wanted to achieve together;
- An in-depth analysis of the interests of the partners and other actors involved in the innovation process, as well as their expected roles and responsibilities in the process;
- An action plan for the joint innovation process and research proposal development;
- A governance and management mechanism for the partnership.

The workshops were also expected to result in concept notes that would be further developed, in proposal development writeshops, into clear proposals to be submitted to donors for funding.

> ULP consortia

In addition to the 19 consortia selected from the calls in 2010 and 2011, PAEPARD mobilized five sub-regional farmer organizations and the Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee (COLEACP), through the Pan-African Farmers' Organization (PAFO) (Table 1).

Table 1: Members of PAFO engaged by PAEPARD to establish multi-stakeholder innovation partnerships through the ULP

PAFO Member	Selected value chain of interest	Countries involved
East Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF)	Beef	Eastern Africa, including Ethiopia
Sub-regional Platform of Central Africa Farmers' Organizations (PROPAC)	Urban	Cameroon, Congo & Democratic Republic of Congo
Network of Farmers' and Producers' Organizations of West Africa (ROPPA)	Rice	Benin, Burkina Faso & Mali
The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN)/ Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU)	Groundnut	Malawi & Zambia
Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee (COLEACP)	Mango non-food uses and horticulture	Burkina-Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal



These farmer-based organizations brought a diversity of grassroots beneficiaries into the PAEPARD project. During 2012, research issues (popularly referred to as “federating themes”) for five ULP groups were further defined and clarified through desk reviews carried out by both internal and external consultants. MSHRQ workshops were then organized to integrate the perceived research needs identified by the various stakeholders involved. On the basis of these questions an integrated research concept note for each of the five ULP consortia was developed. In addition to identifying federating themes, some of the ULP, such as the EAFF consortium, developed concrete strategic plans that assisted them to mobilize funds.

Consolidating multi-stakeholder partnerships

> Forming balanced partnerships

PAEPARD’s goal was to establish ARD partnerships with a balance of researchers and research users, as well as a balance of African and European actors. In terms of balance between researchers and research users the consortia were reasonably balanced. For instance, the nine partnerships selected in 2010 included seven representatives from research organizations, 11 from universities, three from the private sector, another seven from NGOs and the same number from farmer organizations. Looking at these figures, universities and research organizations represent 51.4% of the partners involved, while civil society organizations represent the remaining 48.6%.

However, in terms of African-European representation, the partnerships were not as well balanced. Although the participation of a European organization in the consortia was a requirement for their selection, only three partnerships formed in 2010 included Europe-based representatives, with another three including Africa-based staff from organizations with European (or American) headquarters. The remaining three partnerships had no representatives from European organizations. Despite PAEPARD financing the costs of the partnership inception workshops, it was challenging to get European organizations to invest significant time in the partnership development process, particularly to develop proposals responding to anticipated ARD funding calls over which they did not have full control and, in some cases, had little confidence of success.

In retrospect, some consortium partners felt that the inception workshops alone were not sufficient to build strong and balanced partnerships, and that additional follow-up activities (such as mutual exchange visits) would be useful to build confidence and trust. Stakeholders also indicated that more formal written commitments, which defined the expectations of partners and established accountability mechanisms, needed to be made during the process of project development and implementation.

> Developing bankable ARD projects

The brief concept notes developed by the consortia at the workshops, mainly consisted of a logical framework agreed between partners, and a brief background and justification for the project. Partnership action plans were also developed during the workshops to outline the additional activities needed to: a) identify new partners; b) identify potential funding sources; and c) prepare a full proposal. Most groups considered further face-to-face meetings – and additional financial support – as necessary to carry out these activities.

> Combining research and development

The inception workshops were designed for the different stakeholders represented in the partnerships to arrive at a consensus on the intended outcomes of their collaboration. Given the PAEPARD requirement for consortia to have a practical and widespread impact on the livelihoods of beneficiaries, these objectives went beyond what is often regarded as research to include the provision of services (e.g. technical and market information) to farmers and farmer organizations. For instance, one consortium’s desired outcome largely revolved around curriculum development to enhance networks between North-South universities in research methods training. While many of the broader goals of the consortia could be seen as addressing relevant research and development issues, they required a type of social and economic contextual research less familiar to the often technically-oriented researcher and practitioner that constituted many consortia members, hence the need to strengthen capacities.

The research issues that each ULP would focus on were defined through desk reviews carried out by both internal and external consultants and agreed with the consortium partners in MSHRQ workshops. Though the range of organizations involved in the partnerships was relatively well balanced between academia and civil society organizations, it was challenging to encourage sufficient commitment and participation by European partners.

 **Multi-stakeholder dialogue sets the basis for partnership: trust**

External or internal to the consortium, facilitators shall have a clearly defined role to be successful. Legon University, Ghana.



Developing the capacity of agricultural innovation facilitators

The PAEPARD capacity strengthening strategy was designed to support development of consortia from their initial selection to the acquisition of funding and implementation of research outcomes. The initial partnership building process entailed the selection of consortia through a competitive ARD call issued by PAEPARD in 2010; an inception workshop to develop the consortia’s research theme and their understanding of ARD; the distribution of roles and responsibilities within the consortium; proposal development workshops (writeshops); and reflection and learning workshops.

Agricultural innovation facilitators in PAEPARD

Central to the PAEPARD strategy was the creation of a pool of agricultural innovation facilitators (AIF) to support the networking, proposal development and capacity strengthening of multi-stakeholder ARD innovation partnerships to enable them to respond to ARD funding opportunities. The terms of reference developed by PAEPARD for the AIF saw these individuals as neutral actors, who would promote fair, open and inclusive procedures to accomplish the work of the multi-stakeholder consortia. They were also

viewed as “learning guides” to encourage consortia to think more deeply about their assumptions, beliefs and values, as well as the systematic processes they employ and the context they are operating in.

To fulfil this brokerage and learning role two types of facilitator were considered: internal facilitators from one of the partner organizations and external facilitators, who were independent from the partnership. Internal facilitators were assumed potentially liable to favour the interests of their parent organization, making it difficult for them to gain the trust of other partners. There was also a risk, however, that external facilitators might lack the necessary expertise in the relevant field, or be considered distant and not sufficiently committed to the partnership. In spite of these risks, and an awareness that it would be difficult to find ways of financing external AIF on a long-term basis, PAEPARD recommended that partnerships should preferably select a neutral or external AIF where possible.

AIF were seen by PAEPARD as coordinators, innovators, animators, and teachers all rolled into one. Above all, they should be able to command the respect of the different stakeholders in the consortia that they facilitate. More specifically, the role of AIF was to:

- Encourage the full participation of all partners in the consortia;
- Promote mutual understanding between partners;
- Promote partners’ social learning;
- Further develop their facilitative role as appropriate.

Selecting and inducting agricultural innovation facilitators

> Selection of AIF for consortia formed from the 1st call

In all three workshops, discussions concerning the role of the AIF – a new concept to most participants, particularly in the format suggested by PAEPARD – were promoted *vis à vis* the role of the project leader or “principal investigator”, with which participants were more familiar. Most consortia participants struggled to visualize the role for an external facilitator in addition to the project leader, but accepted that there could be specific occasions when such a facilitator may be useful (e.g., in project inception workshops, or during periodic steering committee meetings, and consortium reflection events).

All nine partnerships selected in 2010 were requested to nominate external facilitators as part of the call procedure. In reality, only two of the nine groups included individuals nominated specifically as facilitators, and these were both selected internally from one of the consortium partners. Instead most groups nominated a “leader” from within the partnership, or someone from one of the organizations involved (usually from a research organization) as a facilitator. Other than their participation in the inception workshop, along with other members of the consortia, no additional effort was made to develop the capacity of these two facilitators.

The lack of enthusiasm for supporting the development of AIF proposed by PAEPARD began to raise significant questions concerning their role in relatively small consortia, particularly as PAEPARD was offering external AIF facilitating allowances while the coordinators – who championed the research idea and initiated the consortia – were not paid. Nevertheless, AIF remained at the heart of the PAEPARD approach to capacity strengthening due to their neutrality in the consortia.

> Selection of AIF for consortia formed from the 2nd call

To support the consortia selected in 2011, PAEPARD intended to identify a pool of potential facilitators (150) with a view to build their capacities to facilitate multi-stakeholder partnership development. A dedicated solicitation for AIF was launched in August 2011. Two hundred *curricula vitae* were screened, based on their experience, their geographical origin and the type of organization that the applicant came from. In total 25 facilitators were selected from a variety of farmer

organizations, NGOs, research organizations and private sector companies.

The chosen AIF were invited to attend an induction workshop in Entebbe, Uganda, towards the end of 2011. The main objective of this induction workshop was to familiarise participants with their potential role as facilitators of the agricultural innovation partnerships established with the support of PAEPARD. The expected workshop outputs included:


- Development of AIF understanding of PAEPARD objectives and processes;
- Review, revision and acceptance by both facilitators and project leaders of the role of AIF;
- Understanding and recognition of the skills required by AIF and an agreed draft programme for skills development;
- Development and agreement on an action plan for AIF support to ARD consortia selected through the 1st and 2nd PAEPARD calls and the ULP;
- Definition and agreement of the input required and terms and conditions for the engagement of AIF within the PAEPARD project.

The main activities during the workshop consisted of short presentations, group work, plenary and/or open space discussions, role play, etc. Considerable effort was spent discussing how the facilitators and their role in the PAEPARD consortia processes could be supported, both administratively and financially. As a consequence less time could be devoted to imparting facilitation skills.

> Selection of AIF for the ULP consortia

During 2012, the “federating themes” for the five ULP consortia were defined and clarified through desk reviews carried out by both internal and external consultants. On the basis of the research questions, an integrated research concept note for each ULP consortia was developed. To coordinate the process of the MSHRQ workshops, 17 representatives of the five ULP consortia and the facilitators nominated by them, as well as project leaders, were invited to a second AIF induction workshop in Entebbe, Uganda, in November 2012. The main objectives of the workshop were to:

- Familiarize participants with the project;
- Review the progress of the ULP approach;
- Review and, if necessary, revise the role of the ULP facilitators and their terms of engagement;
- Review and adapt action plans for each ULP;
- Develop a programme for the MSHRQ workshops;
- Familiarize participants with the PAEPARD website and how it could be used to identify and promote communication between potential partners in ARD and obtain financing for ARD partnership.

 **External or internal to the consortium, facilitators shall have a clearly defined role to be successful**

AIF experience in brokering and facilitating partnerships

> Reflecting on the success of AIF

After the induction workshops for the AIF in 2011 and 2012, PAEPARD reviewed the experience of the facilitators in brokering consortia activities, as well as the progress that the consortia had made in developing research proposals and obtaining finance for the agreed research agenda. The PAEPARD mid-term review in 2012 contributed to a reflection on the success of facilitators in building capacity for ARD innovation partnerships, and a questionnaire in the same year brought responses from seven AIF and four project coordinators from the 10 consortia selected in 2011. The role and success of AIF was further explored in a workshop for project managers, coordinators and facilitators of the consortia selected in 2011 and ULP consortia in September 2013, to review the partnerships’ experiences of working with AIF and the lessons learned.

Generally, the facilitators successfully managed the process of multi-stakeholder mobilization (inception workshops for the consortia selected in 2011 and MSHRQ workshops for the ULP consortia). These events established a degree of trust and good working relationships between the stakeholders involved in each consortium, and brought together different actors that might not have otherwise collaborated (e.g. agricultural entrepreneurs and non-agricultural business service providers). The overall conclusion was that the resulting research concept notes were well balanced, with the research problems that consortia intended to address led by the “non-research” partners (such as farmers’ groups and NGO).

However, the AIF were less successful in brokering linkages between the consortia and external sources of finance. Among the consortia from the 2nd PAEPARD call, AIF hardly played a role after they had organized an inception workshop to bring partners together and explore initial collaboration. This was probably because they had neither the capacity nor experience to guide consortia to transform their respective concept notes into full proposals. Only exceptionally did external AIF participate in the proposal development “writeshop” (see Section 4), or go on to play a role in the implementation of the funded projects. Some of the selected AIF also doubled as members of the ULP, which meant they themselves needed skills in proposal development.

In many cases, when the concept note was developed into a formal research proposal, emphasis switched from the role of AIF to that of the principal investigator of the research organization, who was responsible for submitting a proposal as required by the donor. Nevertheless, PAEPARD envisaged the role of AIF as facilitating, not just face-to-face meetings (such as inception workshops and writeshops), but effectively engaging consortia via virtual means – social media and emails – to consolidate the partnership and develop successful research proposals.

> Lessons learned in facilitating partnerships

The intention to create a large pool of AIF across the continent to facilitate stakeholder interaction and learning, as well as proposal writing and acquisition of funding proved over ambitious. The lack of clarity in regards to the role of AIF and the diverse competencies expected from them (as value chain experts, skilled in proposal drafting and fund raising), in addition to the question of how to finance them via external sources, were persistent issues for PAEPARD. There were also a limited number of opportunities for the participation of AIF on account of the small number of consortia and slow pace of progress. In most cases, it proved unrealistic that these actors could link consortia to funding as they did not have the necessary avenues (skills and experience) to access donors.

Ultimately, PAEPARD has come to the conclusion that perfect innovation brokers do not exist and there is an opportunity to develop professional training for such personnel, who are able to handle the capacity needs and interests of multi-stakeholder ARD partnerships. When listing the skills and attitudes required in a good innovation broker, the preferred qualities are apparently endless. In future, it would be helpful to organize structured exchange between different facilitators to allow them to share their experiences and build their capacities. A mechanism to coordinate the activities of the AIF to strengthen a community of practice among them was dropped in the early stages of the PAEPARD project, so tracking how they may have otherwise used the expertise they built is not possible.

Though the role of AIF was heavily debated throughout the PAEPARD project, with many groups finding it difficult to distinguish between a consortium leader/coordinator and a facilitator. In most cases, AIF helped broker and facilitate interaction between the stakeholders during the inception and MSHRQ workshops to ensure the consolidation of balanced partnerships.



Group discussion at the inception of PAEPARD regional users-led process (ULP), Douala, Cameroon.

Developing capacity to formulate research proposals

Proposal development

As noted in the introduction, one aim of PAEPARD was to increase the capacity of African stakeholders to compete for available ARD funding opportunities from EU calls. After the brokerage of potential ARD partnerships through the inception and MSHRQ workshops, the next step was to support the consortia to convert their research concept notes into full project proposals in response to defined funding opportunities. However, there were no funding calls that supported the type of balanced multi-stakeholder, African-European ARD partnerships being promoted by PAEPARD.

To adapt to this situation, PAEPARD management applied several modifications that opened the way for consortia to develop proposals in response to a wider range of calls. These adaptations included:

a) Lifting the restriction that required consortia to only respond to EU-ARD calls so that they could develop proposals for other open-ARD calls published by partner development agencies, including foundations, multilateral and bilateral donors, and continental and national funding mechanisms;

b) Lifting the restriction that required consortia to stick with original research ideas based on crafted concept notes to allow them to exercise flexibility and change their ideas, including the focus value chain. This was necessary in order to comply with available research call requirements and conditions;

c) Reconfiguring partnerships and/or creating new ones in line with the eligibility criteria, especially geographical coverage requirements of open ARD calls.

The above alterations and other modifications permitted PAEPARD to engage different consortia to prepare and submit applications in response to an identified funding source that was favourable to the type of balanced multi-stakeholder partnerships for ARD supported by PAEPARD. In many cases the consortia value chains of interest were not priority areas in published research calls. In fact, consortia that insisted on their original focus value chain missed opportunities for funding. Review comments on the Togo pepper consortium proposals, for example, always indicated that pepper was not important for food security. The coordinator of this consortium – who was full of good ideas – always packaged good proposals that attracted the interest of reviewers, but the fact that pepper was not a priority crop, meant that the proposals were rarely supported (Africa-Brazil MarketPlace funded it in 2015-17). With declining support for ARD, partnerships clearly need to be able to exercise flexibility to fit funding call requirements.

Consortia and newly constituted partnerships were mobilized to either participate in a face-to-face workshop (writeshop) or engage via virtual communication (social media and email) to prepare proposals for identified funding opportunities. To develop a successful proposal requires more time investment than just a 5-day writeshop; consortia usually only complete a third of the task during the writeshop, and thereafter, further engagement with the consortia, via email and telecommunication, is required up until the time of submission. Once proposals were submitted PAEPARD continued to assist the consortia to respond to review comments and endorsed agreements for those that won grants. A table of the identified calls for which PAEPARD consortia and ULP were mobilized has been published in PAEPARD Policy Brief N°6⁷.

Through the writeshops and virtual engagement, 79 concept notes and proposals were drafted and 22 proposals have been funded since 2012. The total amount these proposals have secured during the period 2012-2018 is EUR 37,735,017.56. Details and updates on the different PAEPARD consortia and institutions that received funds as a result of PAEPARD support can be accessed from the RUFORUM website⁸. Whether or not the consortia proposals were successful, the writeshops still helped to build participants' proposal writing capacity.

PAEPARD seed funding

The PAEPARD financial support for proposal development can be seen as seed money invested in African partners to build their capacity to create and manage functional multi-stakeholder partnerships and mobilize funds for their activities. From 17 December 2009 to 16 December 2017, PAEPARD consortia have received a total amount of EUR 14,054,819.16 from the European Commission (80%) and partners participating in the consortia (20%). This seed money was used to leverage a total of EUR 36,709,844.2 through different PAEPARD and non-PAEPARD projects. The return on investment (ROI) as defined by economists – (net profit/cost of investment) x100 – for PAEPARD initial seed funding is therefore 161.2%. If we limit the investment to the expenditure engaged in writeshops (approximately EUR 800,000) then the ROI will be even higher, offering an alternative perspective to the success rate of the PAEPARD facilitated proposals.

To provide more appropriate seed funding, PAEPARD mobilized the Competitive Research Fund



Team work at PAEPARD also generated lessons to be learned. Rwanda.

(CRF) and the Incentive Fund (IF) to support promising consortia. The IF financed consortia activities costing a maximum of EUR 40,000 for studies and workshops to refine research questions, or to fund writeshops, exchange visits and funding searches. Meanwhile, the CRF provided additional seed money of up to EUR 300,000 over the course of 3 years to support selected consortia to implement innovative ARD projects, as well as leverage support to secure additional funding. The CRF was awarded based on a competitive research call restricted to PAEPARD consortia. Four PAEPARD consortia⁹ were selected to receive CRF support from 11 applications submitted in May 2014. All four of the successful consortia used review comments from previous submissions to research calls that had not been successful to improve their proposals. The CRF is also dedicated to building a sustainable multi-stakeholder platform that will facilitate continued engagement to implement initiated ARD activities.

Outcomes of PAEPARD support for ARD proposal development and implementation

Efforts to develop grant winning proposals through writeshops, as well as virtual engagements with PAEPARD consortia, between 2012 and 2017, involved all 19 PAEPARD consortia and the five ULP consortia. The successfully secured grant funding has facilitated more than 20 ARD project ideas for PAEPARD consortia in Eastern, Southern and West Africa. The implementation process of these projects, independently from PAEPARD management, has consolidated the working relationships between research and non-research stakeholders in agriculture.

⁷ Funding agricultural research for development: Lessons from PAEPARD. Policy Brief N°6, December 2017. FARA (Pub.), Accra, Ghana, 12 p.

⁸ <http://repository.ruforum.org/documents/summary-projects-developed-paepard-write-shops-and-funding-statusoutcome>

⁹ The CRF consortia include: the soybean consortium (Sojagron) based in Benin; the groundnut consortium (GnVC) in Malawi and Zambia; the Trichoderma consortium (Bioprotect) in sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. Burkina Faso and Senegal), and the African indigenous vegetables consortium (AIV) in Uganda.



During this process, non-research actors have had the opportunity to articulate their needs and demands for research, while researchers themselves have benefitted from working with end-users to develop and contextualize a research agenda that is relevant for socio-economic development. The autonomous process has strengthened the capacity of both research and non-research stakeholders to effectively innovate in agriculture.

In addition to sourcing implementation funds, PAEPARD engagement with consortia to develop successful ARD project proposals had other outcomes:

- The consolidation of partnerships as well-established, new and functional multi-stakeholder consortia;
- The development of participants’ skills in project proposal writing, which has significantly enhanced their ability to respond to ARD calls, as well as in general research writing for the documentation of research outcomes and production of scholarly manuscripts or popular knowledge products.

In addition to developing concept notes and proposals, PAEPARD supported consortia to package data and publish scientific or technical papers. For instance, the potato seed consortium in Burundi was guided by RUFORUM to curate a manuscript, which has since been published in the Journal of European Association of Potato Research. Similarly, other consortia (e.g. the Sojagnon, Trichoderma and Groundnut Value chain consortia) have been supported to publish their research findings in international scientific journals. The diverse authorship of these publications demonstrate the broad partnership arrangements that characterise PAEPARD consortia.

> **Reflection on the lessons learned**

A short session was organized as a side-event at the 5th African Higher Education week in Cape Town, in December 2016, to review the PAEPARD writeshops and virtual (via Skype and email iterations) ARD project development experience with a number of people familiar with the PAEPARD process¹⁰. The event concluded that preparation for project proposal development was critical, especially since participants were not familiar with ARD research calls. Although the number of participants in the individual writeshops was high (up to 50), this was not seen as a problem due to good organization.

The request for numerous representatives from each project group expressed the high interest in participating in the writeshops. For maximum



Young ladies are highly interested in organic agriculture training sessions, to test and adapt innovation, and also to express their needs. Burkina Faso.

efficiency, the facilitation management agreed that there should be between 2 and 5 representatives per consortium. Representatives were selected based on whether they had the minimum experience required to develop, not only a sound proposal in the context of ARD, but also trust among the partners. The degree of competition for the funding calls led to participants’ reluctance to share ideas during the writeshops. In general, it was felt that the writeshops worked best when they were involving PAEPARD consortia only, and not opened to external ARD partnerships.

A key assumption of the PAEPARD project had been that ARD related funding from EU ARD calls, which promoted African-European partnerships would be readily available for the consortia. This, however, was not the case and meant that the partnership development and capacity strengthening process needed to be both innovative and flexible, allowing for changes to consortia membership, including the addition of new emerging partners, and even changes to the commodities or research ideas that the original consortia had been formed around.

Given the lack of appropriate funding opportunities, many groups struggled to maintain the initial momentum generated by the inception workshops and concept note development activities, which caused difficulties in consolidating their ARD multi-stakeholder partnership. However, the seed funding provided through the CRF-IF mechanisms helped to mitigate this problem. The CRF provided the opportunity for the four selected consortia to implement their project ideas in line with the PAEPARD approach to ARD; while the IF supported consortia to remain engaged in a process of partnership building, as well as transform their respective concept notes into full proposals in line with the available research funding sources.

¹⁰ van Veldhuizen, L. 2016. The PAEPARD writeshop experiences side event at the 5th African Higher Education week, Cape Town, 18 October 2016. Summary report. Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

¹¹ The Sojagnon consortium in Benin; the groundnut value chain consortium in Malawi and Zambia; the Trichoderma consortium in Burkina Faso; the African indigenous vegetables consortium in Uganda; the potato seed consortium in Burundi; and the consortium to improve productivity and marketing for smallholders in Western Kenya. The first four won the PAEPARD CRF, whilst the other two were supported by external funding (ARF).

¹² The core group is a small team of experts that was established after the MSHRQ workshop (step four of the ULP) and tasked to steer forward the ULP consortia.

Consolidating learning (reflection and learning workshops)

Initial reflection workshop

Halfway into the implementation of PAEPARD II, a reflection workshop was organized to take stock of achievements. The workshop took place from 27 to 30 April 2015 and brought together various PAEPARD

partners, namely the six funded consortia at that point in time¹¹; five representatives of the ULP; different work package (WP) leaders (from WP Coordination, WP Communication, WP Advocacy, WP Capacity Building and WP Partnership); and PAEPARD project managers to reflect on the means of documenting the change process.

Building on a common understanding of ARD, the workshop identified and analyzed the key opportunities and challenges of the initial consortia, ULP consortia and WP, and elaborated short and mid-term potential solutions and actions (Table 2).

Table 2: Opportunities and challenges identified in PAEPARD reflection workshop

Groups	Opportunities	Challenges
Consortia from the 1 st and 2 nd PAEPARD calls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong involvement of African consortia members;• Stability of consortia members;• PAEPARD initiatives to strengthen relations with European partners;• Capacity building through interactions with other consortia at workshops to share different methods of work in the development of a consortium;• Establishment of networks, consortia and multi-stakeholder platforms;• Some consortia proposals gained funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty identifying a European partner;• Low participation of the European partner due to diverging interests and limited budgets;• Lack of full-time staff in the consortia;• Lack of communication strategy and equipment;• Slowness of the selection procedure and approval of proposals by PAEPARD;• Lack of formal agreements between partners except in response to specific calls;• Difficulty in standardizing research methods among partners, especially among researchers and NGO;• Very few funding opportunities for many value chains (e.g., cassava);• Systematic use of the English language in communication.
ULP consortia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standardization of understanding of PAEPARD;• Establishment of consortia;• Submission of concept notes (to PAEPARD and other donors);• Exchange of experiences within PAEPARD to enable:<ul style="list-style-type: none">i) sustainable activities,ii) development of research proposals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty in choosing unifying themes;• Problems related to facilitators’ selection, their inadequate capacity and unclear role and the lack of budget to sustain their activities;• The lack of activities, dynamism, and support from the core group¹²;• Low participation of European stakeholders;• Difficulties in communication;• External funding mechanisms often exclude multi-county teams and unifying themes;• Lack of information (e.g., about EU partner organizations or funding opportunities).
WP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existence of partnership agreements with consortia;• Existence of a guide for building multi-stakeholder partnerships;• Draft of the monitoring and evaluation action plan;• Good visibility and corporate image of PAEPARD;• Existence of a strategy and tools for communication and advocacy;• Responses to calls;• Detailed idea of AIF (skills and resources).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitoring of activities;• Change of leadership;• Low participation of European partners;• Low participation of African researchers;• Documentation is poor and/or non-existent;• Low participation of AIF;• Communication tools not used;• Strict PAEPARD policies for make-up of consortia;• Too many drafts, not enough publications;• Roles and responsibilities are not well defined.



PAEPARD inception workshop of the ULP-PROPAC, Douala, Cameroon.

It was realized that, beyond the challenges specific to each project and country, there were similar achievements and obstacles among all the consortia. Issues such as partnerships with European researchers, funding/resource mobilization, consortia facilitation by AIF and insufficient management rules and procedures for consortia, were common to all.

The identified challenges were grouped into five themes – (i) partnerships, (ii) facilitating the multi-stakeholder platform process, (iii) communication, (iv) management and organization of consortia, and (v) PAEPARD coordination – and proposed solutions were recommended for each group. To address the challenges related to partnerships it was suggested, among other solutions, that stronger links to regional research organizations in Africa be established, a database of potential European partners be developed, and stronger advocacy efforts undertaken to increase funding for ARD and strengthen European-African co-funding procedures.

With regards to multi-stakeholder learning and development processes, there is a need to move beyond the sole focus on calls for proposals and institutionalize multi-stakeholder processes, procedures and guidelines. The need for facilitators of such processes was now more strongly recognized by the consortia who had started to implement research activities and it was proposed that a facilitator database be set up for those consortia that wished to engage an AIF in future. Much emphasis was placed on strengthening the capacity of consortia to use information management tools for facilitation, monitoring and evaluation, and dissemination of research outcomes, as well as the need to increase funding for project coordination. There was also a call

to develop, implement and monitor a communication strategy between all PAEPARD parties (consortia and WP) to produce communication tools in English and French and empower consortia to use them.

Solutions were then prioritized and compared with the PAEPARD work plan to see where it might be modified. A clear priority for continued support in proposal writing emerged, as did the issue of project management skills for leadership of the consortia. The issue of e-learning, which had been planned as an additional capacity strengthening avenue, was not identified by participants as a pressing need of the consortia.

A further objective of the reflection and learning workshop was to introduce ways in which the consortia and WP could document and analyze the change process by developing a “learning agenda” and adopting a more rigorous monitoring and evaluation framework.

Defining PAEPARD pathways of change

In December 2016, another brief reflection exercise was undertaken with the funded consortia to demonstrate that initial challenges had been overcome and document the results of consortia activities. The role of AIF in facilitating consortia management, monitoring and evaluation, change process tracking, communication and linkages to external actors, as well as advocacy of the multi-stakeholder ARD approach among regional research organizations and the donor community was identified during this reflection exercise.

PAEPARD moved beyond the sole focus on research proposals and started to institutionalize multi-stakeholder processes, procedures and guidelines

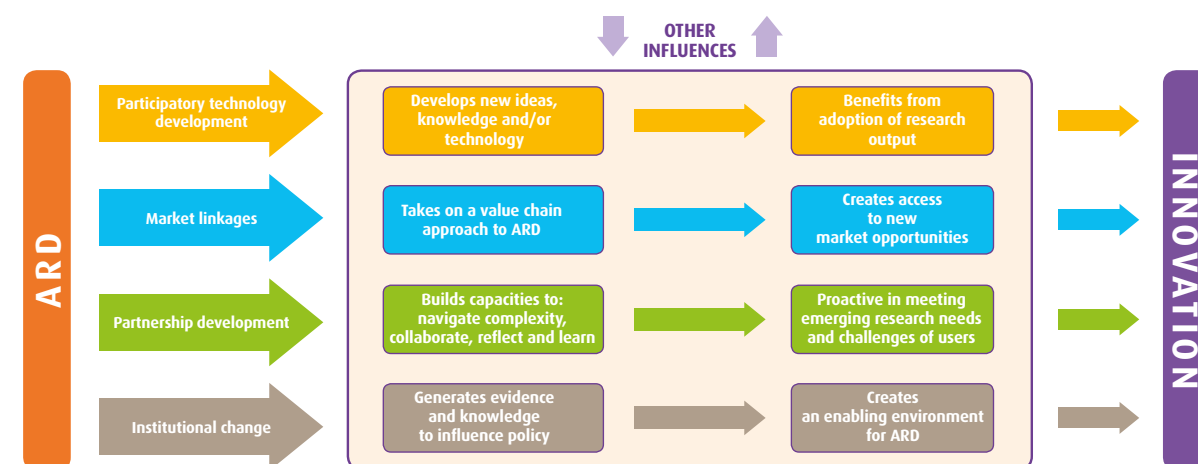


Figure 2: PAEPARD innovation pathways.

The exercise also made it possible to more clearly define pathways of change for the PAEPARD project and provide an analytical framework to assess how change within the consortia projects had come about. Through its ARD approach, PAEPARD consortia and their partners have followed four main pathways to innovation: transferring technical knowledge and skills, creating new and sustainable market linkages, forming innovative partnerships among different stakeholders and influencing the policy and regulatory environment to promote ARD (Figure 2). However, not all consortia followed all of the pathways simultaneously.

A two-day training was also held on project cycle management for 25 consortia representatives attending the RUFORUM Biennial in Cape Town, in December 2016. During this event, the PAEPARD communication strategy was developed with appropriate tools and consortia members were trained on the use of these tools.

As a follow-up activity, in February 2017, the PAEPARD innovation pathways were used as a framework to analyze the process of change followed by the consortium on indigenous vegetables in Uganda. This exercise provided new insights for the project on how the change process had come about, for instance, the role of the private sector – after the initial research had been completed – in providing markets for research outputs was seen as crucial in taking the project results further and up-scaling research findings.

Review and capitalization workshop

In October 2017, during a final workshop in Cotonou to capitalize on the learning from the experiences

of the PAEPARD consortia and partners, a session was held on capacity strengthening interventions. Participants in the session, who represented the Anglophone funded consortia were asked to reflect on the partnership inception workshops, the role of AIF and the proposal development writeshops/MSHRQ workshops. The participants considered the extent to which each of these elements had been critical to the formation and/or funding of the partnership. In addition, they were asked if the project had provided sufficient opportunities for reflection, learning and exchange in knowledge between consortia.

The inception workshops were unanimously seen as critical for understanding the PAEPARD process and building the consortia teams. These workshops served as springboards for building functional partnerships. Similarly, the proposal development writeshops received a positive response, both in terms of helping to mobilize funds and as instrumental in understanding the wider complexity of the context in which the projects were embedded, as well as the opportunities they provided to strengthen partnerships, exchange ideas and experiences with other consortia. The risk, however, of other consortia poaching one's ideas during such workshops was also pointed out.

In contrast, the response was negative in regards to the AIF. The main criticism was that external facilitators were often not committed to the project or lacked in-depth understanding of the subject matter. One of the participants from the ULP consortia, who had been trained as a facilitator emphasised the positive learning experience for him personally and the acquisition of skills, which he had used in a professional capacity. He however, concurred with the group that external facilitators contributed little to the consortia. Whilst the workshop on project

management was appreciated it was felt that it came a little late in the project and would have been useful at the beginning of the implementation phase.

With regards to future efforts of PAEPARD, it was felt that there should be a continuation with existing consortia and ULPs to deepen and develop partnerships. PAEPARD should, however, also focus on continuing efforts to consolidate funding, improve capacities for project management and administration, and address emerging technical needs. For new African-European partnerships developed in the future, a better way of identifying European partners with a shared interest in the consortia's research focus is required.

Lessons learned from reflection events

Whilst the first learning event with funded consortia from the 1st and 2nd PAEPARD calls, ULP consortia and WP representatives identified several challenges to the initial stages of PAEPARD operation, it also created stronger ownership of the larger PAEPARD project and increased understanding of how each group contributed to the overall goals of the project. The second reflection event in December also demonstrated that as implementation of consortia research activities had progressed and the partnership formation stage had been completed, consortia began to see the need for ongoing AIF support.

The findings from the second reflection workshop strengthen the insight that the role of AIF becomes necessary when funding has been accessed and as a certain stage of implementation is reached, which calls for more intensive interaction between various actors. For instance, in the case of the indigenous vegetables consortium in Uganda, much of the project focus had been on testing the varieties of vegetables with farmer groups and identifying suitable ones for marketing. It was only towards the close of the project that issues of closer collaboration with the private sector and market actors became more central and research took a back seat. This was seen to possibly call for external mediation/facilitation that could no longer be provided by the research members of the consortium, who saw themselves as taking on a more passive supportive role.

However, doubts remained about the benefits of external AIF for strengthening consortia capacities in ARD when they were discussed at the capitalization workshop in October 2017. At all three workshops reflecting on the capacity strengthening provided by

PAEPARD, it was agreed that the inception workshops, MSHRQ workshops and writeshops were useful for establishing strong multi-stakeholder partnerships. In contrast, the difficulties in mobilizing funding and engaging European researchers were more or less universally shared at these events. The reflection process enabled consortia to discuss potential solutions to these challenges, such as the development of a database of potential European partners.



Facilitation team of PAEPARD writeshop in Uganda (RUFORUM).

PAEPARD lessons on capacity strengthening of multi-stakeholder partnerships for ARD

> Overarching learning points from the PAEPARD project

For each of the specific capacity strengthening interventions outlined above key learning points can be identified.

- **It is necessary to invest significant time in the consolidation of multi-stakeholder partnerships and consortia action plans from the start.** The idea of creating large multi-stakeholder platforms that exist without funding was ambitious, given that many consortia members were new to the concept of ARD

at the beginning of the PAEPARD project. Smaller, time-bound initiatives are needed to kick start multi-stakeholder interaction and motivate partners to come together. In this regard, the CRF consortia have been successful and show that indeed much time needs to be invested at the beginning of a partnership in the research and innovation process, often jointly with producers, before the private sector can be brought on board. It is only now, as the CRF comes to an end, that some consortia are beginning to pay attention to market opportunities and linkages.

- **To maximize impacts consortia need strategic, but flexible action plans.** Some projects, such as the soybean consortia in Benin, addressed all four pathways to innovation from the outset and, over time, were able to build on multiple interventions with other programmes in addition to PAEPARD. This indicates the need for consortia to plan strategically from the outset to allow them to be innovative and flexible in sourcing support.

- **Support in proposal development has proved central to helping consortia source funding and kick start multi-stakeholder collaboration.** Consultations with consortia continually stressed the need for this capacity strengthening support, despite the fact that the writeshops did not automatically lead to the success of proposals in accessing funding. Innovative ways of continuing such support in the future need to be explored, such as inter-consortia learning and support at a regional level, or the involvement of AIFs to support individual consortia.

- **Stakeholders need support to build new skills in areas they are less familiar with.** The process of creating an understanding of ARD, which grew over time within the PAEPARD project, showed that beyond the professional skills and knowledge in agriculture and research that members brought to the partnerships, there was a need for less conventional skills, including:

- Analytical skills to understand the complex interactions within a given commodity value chain, from production to consumption, and to identify key leverage points to engage to achieve results;
- Planning skills to develop project/research ideas, including appropriate monitoring and evaluation frameworks, theory of change development and identification of partners' roles;
- Collaborative skills, such as communication, teamwork and partnership building.

- **External facilitation is necessary for effective reflection and learning.** The reflection and learning events in 2015 and 2016 were limited in terms of time investment. As the research projects progressed into the implementation phase, consortia began to understand more clearly the need to document the change process and provide a framework for capturing the lessons learnt. In this regard, it was also evident, that external support is central to this process of collaborative reflection and learning.

- **The capacity strengthening needs of multi-stakeholder partnerships change over time.** The changing attitudes of consortia towards reflection and learning, as well as external facilitation, highlights the fact that the capacity strengthening needs of partnerships change over time with the need to tackle new situations and challenges. Hence, the need to regularly review and adapt interventions. For instance, advocacy skills were rated very low priority in the 2013 survey, but by the end of 2016, those consortia that were already implementing projects and had gone beyond technological research began to see the need for fostering an enabling environment linked to the area they were working in or for ARD more generally.

- **A continual yet flexible capacity strengthening strategy is needed to support multi-stakeholder ARD consortia.** The process of capacity strengthening involves:

- An ongoing interactive process through facilitation and coaching (as opposed to one-off training) to ensure a process of joint learning;
- Contextualization and adaption of all interventions to the specific organizational and institutional environment in which they are taking place;
- Flexible interventions for each consortia – capacity strengthening activities within a partnership may undergo many changes over time due to the range of perspectives of different stakeholders and the changing focus or composition of the partnership.

> Key challenges to consider for future ARD projects

The key challenges that future ARD projects could learn from in creating an enabling environment included:

- The organizational constraints (e.g., lack of understanding of the role of AIF);
- The restricted funding for ARD project ideas



developed from concept notes by PAEPARD consortia;

- The lack of conducive conditions to involve European partners, in particular with regards to funding conditions;
- The importance of addressing each pathway of change, but also being aware that at certain points in a projects’ lifetime certain pathways will have more prominence. For instance, the CRF have concentrated first on the research results before looking at market

linkages, or the policy environment;

- Although AIF were not fully utilized by consortia as ongoing facilitators, it was important to maintain a pool of local trainers/consultants (and a funding mechanism to support their employment), which could be called on for intermittent support – to support reflection and learning exercises and project management after implementation was underway, for instance.



Capacity strengthening is mainly about human relationship: talking with oral and body language, being natural, honest and respectful. South of Benin.

Conclusions

Given the complexity of the PAEPARD project, it is not surprising that it has been necessary to review and adapt the capacity strengthening strategy as the project progressed. In the initial stages of partnership formation PAEPARD capacity strengthening efforts needed to focus on building trust and collaboration between the different partners to help them agree on a key research area and create strong proposals to enable them to source funding. Once consortia had gained funding the priority of PAEPARD capacity strengthening provisions shifted to help implement the project and scale-out outputs.

It is evident that for some consortia without access to funding, the partnership action plans have not been realized. In some cases, initial enthusiasm for collaboration declined due to the lack of funds to implement ideas. Proposal writing skills have, therefore, remained central to PAEPARD capacity strengthening efforts to help partnerships access the required funding.

Brokerage needs to be further experimented, that includes further capacity strengthening of all partners

The writeshops and virtual project development engagements were all the more important as the eligibility criteria and focus for the various funding calls changed frequently, requiring new consortia compositions and even different research themes. This variation means that it is not possible to simply have a standard proposal to submit to each call, and consortia must re-plan and adapt their proposals each time. Similarly, it is advisable that consortia are able to exercise flexibility to modify their focus research area and reconfigure the composition of the partnership to allow them to better align their research proposals with available ARD funding calls.

The cornerstone of the PAEPARD capacity strengthening strategy – the facilitation of

consortia through AIF – proved flawed, not only due to the lack of a financing mechanism to employ their skills, but also because the very small consortia felt, in the initial stages of their development, that the services of an external AIF were not required. Only when those funded projects have gone beyond the “scientific” research phase and begun to contemplate marketing their research outputs and strengthening partnerships between value chain actors, does the need for impartial facilitators become recognized.

As project implementation progressed, consortia also recognized the need for new areas of knowledge. Once consortia began accessing funding, calls for project management, analytical and process mapping skills became more prominent. Having a pool of AIF in place – who can be called on to facilitate collaboration, relationship building, reflection and learning, and provide ongoing coaching, as well as deliver very specific support, such as in project management or leadership training – still remains relevant to the ARD process. New mechanisms for engaging facilitators externally to the consortia, and/or strengthening the capacity of consortia members to play such roles, need to be explored.

Beyond the already identified challenges – a lack of appropriate funding channels for ARD and difficulties engaging European research partners – the need to develop a capacity strengthening mechanism that is flexible and can be called on as different needs arise remains a central challenge. The reflection exercises, which took place during the course of the project helped to identify the key flaws in the PAEPARD capacity strengthening strategy and consider solutions to address them.

The lessons from these reflection and learning events should be taken into account for any future projects intended to strengthen the capacity of multi-stakeholder partnerships for ARD.





PAEPARD



The Platform for Africa-Europe Partnership in Agricultural Research for Development (**PAEPARD**) is a 8-year project sponsored by the European Commission (80%) and partners' own contribution (20%).

It has been coordinated by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (**FARA**) since December 2009, and was extended until end of 2017.

It aims at building joint African-European multi-stakeholder partnerships in agricultural research for development (**ARD**) contributing to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. On the European side, the partners are **AGRINATURA** (The European Alliance on Agriculture Knowledge for Development, coordinating the European partners), **COLEACP** (representing the private sector), **CSA** (representing the NGOs), **ICRA**, specialized in capacity building in ARD, and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (**CTA**). On the African side and in addition to FARA, the partners are the Pan-African Farmers Organization (**PAFO**), the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (**RUFORUM**) based in Kampala, and the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (**FANRPAN**) based in Pretoria. PAFO involves its members that are the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (**EAFF**) based in Nairobi, the Réseaux des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs d'Afrique de l'Ouest (**ROPPO**) based in Ouagadougou, and the Plate-forme Régionale des Organisations Paysannes d'Afrique Centrale (**PROPAC**) based in Yaoundé. The Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (**SACAU**) is an associate partner of **PAEPARD**.



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