



# PAEPARD



THEMATIC BRIEF #3



Strengthening the capacity of multi-stakeholder partnerships in ARD



## Adaptive leadership in ARD

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**The success of multi-stakeholder ARD** (Agricultural Research for Development) partnerships is often attributed to stakeholder interaction and knowledge exchange, collective learning and establishment of mutual trust between the partners involved. Achieving these outcomes depends very much on the leadership of the partnership, and how this leadership relates to partnership facilitation and also project coordination and/or management. This brief explores the different skills and attitudes required by leaders of ARD partnerships, and how these relate to different contexts.

## Distinguishing leadership, facilitation and management

**Leadership** normally implies giving direction by going in front or bringing a group or organization to a particular destination. A good leader is proactive in creating a vision of where to go, as well as guiding followers on how to get there. Being a leader usually implies formal authority, the power of decision over group/team members, and responsibility for decisions taken by the group. Leaders can also have informal authority that is given to them by their followers as recognition of their skills and ethics. Leaders can hold both formal and informal authority at the same time, although relying on only formal authority, without the requisite skills and ethics, can lead to lack of respect and difficulties in asserting that authority. Leadership is more about nurturing change, engaging and inspiring followers - not just supervising them.

**Facilitation** literally means “to make something easy” (from the Latin “*facile*”, which means easy). In ARD partnerships, this means helping a team or a group of diverse stakeholders work together to clarify their different perspectives and their context, agree on shared objectives, and to formulate joint actions. A good facilitator has a thorough understanding of process and communication issues, and requires analytical skills, strategic planning skills, process or “soft” skills, skills in guiding group reflection and learning, and documentation skills. It is often argued that a facilitator who is external to the team or group is less likely to be emotionally involved with the issues and team personalities, and so can focus on the *process* rather than the content of the team tasks. However, it is unrealistic to expect even professional facilitators not to have their own values,

interests, relationships and methodological assumptions that determine the facilitation process. So a good facilitator will at least make these interests transparent to the larger group.

**Management** of projects or organizations is mainly about control and responsibility for ensuring the organization or project meets its mandate, objectives or “deliverables”. Skills required by managers include planning, budgeting, sourcing and allocating resources, monitoring and accounting for those resources, managing risks, problem-solving when needed, and reporting (to those financing the organization or project).

These definitions are rather simplistic. In practice, and in ARD partnerships, it is not always easy to separate the different functions or tasks of “leaders”, “facilitators” and “managers”, and there are a multitude of different terms for different leadership styles. Four leadership types are explored below.

## Types of leadership

**Transformational leaders** support others to think differently and work in new ways to face challenges and promote innovation. It is contrasted with *transactional* leadership, where leaders focus more on compliance by their followers through rewards and/or punishments.

Transformational leaders lead teams, networks or organizations where individuals need to apply innovative thinking to solve problems and develop new products and services. They focus more on articulating a vision for the future, and communicating this to followers, developing their trust and inspiring their confidence and motivation. They solicit ideas from followers while at the same time challenging assumptions, helping them change the way they think about and frame challenges.

Through coaching and mentoring, the transformational leader provides opportunities for motivating each team member and building on their strengths allowing team members to grow and become fulfilled in their positions.

**Facilitative leaders** build collaborative relationships and create a supportive environment for teams and networks to achieve their goals. They focus on mobilizing energy and enthusiasm to generate innovative thinking and stimulate strategic action. They encourage open suggestions and

constructive feedback, allowing everyone to be involved and share their thoughts and opinions. They promote reflection to promote questioning and listening and expand learning, challenge comfort zones, create ownership, channel action and create and sustain a learning culture.

This kind of leadership is not based on formal authority or control. Partners, stakeholders and team members share ownership of ideas when there is collective agreement and clarity in the direction of where the project or organization is heading.

Facilitative leaders need to be empathetic and have strong active listening and communication skills. They need to be able to question in such a way as to seek clarification and promote critical thinking, as well as structure and record the learning by the group. Good facilitators are aware of how the members of a group are interacting and feeling, are able to intervene and build rapport and synergy within the group, and also manage the conflicts which inevitably arise in any diverse group.

**Collaborative leaders** are “connectors” who have the ability to link people, ideas, and resources that may not normally come together and who have different values and interests, but nevertheless realize that they can all benefit by sharing experiences and strategies. Collaborative leaders recognize the importance of interpersonal relationships and cross-functional collaboration as crucial for the success of networks which form and reform as new challenges or opportunities emerge.

In general, people gravitate to collaborations where they know and share similar values and perspectives—which can stifle innovation. Collaborative leaders ensure that teams stay fresh by bringing in new actors and infusing new ideas.

Successful collaborative leaders have skills in stakeholder management, strategic planning, quantitative analysis, communication and ability to motivate. They can empathise across sectors, cultures, and languages. They understand a particular issue from the point of view of different actors. They can handle inter-sectoral and complex problems, because they have the ability and well-rounded subject matter expertise to understand multiple perspectives of the same issue.

**Adaptive leaders** incorporate many of the functions, skills and attitudes of collaborative, facilitative and transformative leaders. They promote the adaptability that allows an organization or network to grow, reflect and build on experience to improve future success. They are able to diagnose the challenges in the system, mobilize the resources that exist in the system, and understand their own role within it.

Adaptive leaders drive forward change, assisting organizations and individuals to deal with consequential change in times of uncertainty, when no clear answers are forthcoming. They identify and deal with *systemic change* confronting the status quo and mobilize the resources within the system to address these.

Adaptive leaders provide the support, skills and understanding needed to expertly distinguish between what is expendable and what is essential. They make use of a set of practices and strategies that are designed to assist individuals and organizations in breaking through gridlocks, accomplishing profound change and developing the adaptability required to blossom in challenging, competitive and complex environments.

## Leadership in ARD partnerships

**The demands of ARD partnerships** and innovation mean that leaders of these partnerships need to be more than just project managers. Core activities of ARD Partnerships also include facilitating collaboration, communication, team-building and conflict resolution, encouraging others to jointly find solutions and resources, and promoting joint reflection and continuous learning (see *Table 1* next page). The types of leadership described above (facilitative, collaborative, adaptive) are well suited to ARD partnerships. ARD leaders need to help partner organizations and networks successfully adapt and respond to a changing environment. Innovation calls for changes in attitudes and behaviours, processes and structures - not only among the members of a network that is formed around a common challenge, but also for the organizations that support such networks.

At the same time, the tasks of leadership in ARD partnerships do not necessarily have to be invested in one person. A “leader” can be anybody within the partnership who leads specific tasks, regardless of their formal position or even formal role within the partnership. When several different people undertake these different tasks of leadership, this is sometimes referred to as “shared”, “collective” or “distributed leadership”. In fact, the leadership tasks and skills described in *Table 1* are difficult to find in one person, and particularly if that person is also expected to be a project manager. Managers and leaders often have different skill sets. A project manager needs



TABLE 1. Leadership tasks, skills and attitudes required in ARD partnerships. (Source: the authors)

ARD LEADERSHIP TASKS	ARD LEADERSHIP SKILLS	ARD LEADERSHIP ATTITUDES
Partnership brokerage	Networking	Motivating, enthusiastic
Collective vision setting	Systems thinking	Visionary, considering of diverse views and courses of action
Resource mobilization	Proposal development, negotiation	Proactive, persistent
Partnership facilitation	Communication, team-building and decision-making	Flexible, respectful, positive
Trust building	Listening, conflict resolution, mediation	Open, calm, empathetic
Knowledge exchange, collective learning	Facilitation of joint reflection and learning	Orientation to lifelong learning
Promotion of organizational, systemic change	Strategic planning, business planning	Innovative, risk taking,
External communication, advocacy	Documentation, social media	Confident, audience-oriented

to think logically, linearly or *systematically* (in ensuring consistency and efficiency in planning, budgeting, allocating and accounting for resources, etc.). A partnership manager needs to think more broadly, openly and *systematically* (to understand and address the complex problems faced by ARD partnerships, and manage relationships between partners).

In practice therefore, the different leadership tasks required by ARD partnerships are often distributed (either formally or

informally) between different team members, depending on their individual strengths, skills and characteristics, as well as formal position. These task responsibilities are often expressed in different terms: “project manager”, “ARD champion”, “partnership coordinator”, “principle investigator”, and so on. A good ARD partnership leader will ensure that the required leadership tasks are undertaken, whoever undertakes them and however their position is described.

## Tools for exploring and assessing leadership

### Personal assessment of leadership skills

There are a number of frameworks for individuals to assess their own leadership skills and related personality types. These include:

- **The Leadership Assessment Tool Inventory** from the Kellogg School of Management describes a number of exercises to “assess your ability to apply critical management skills to identify and solve key organizational problems”.
- **Collaborative Leadership: Self-Assessment Questionnaires**, from Turning Point, which focus on assessing the environment, visioning and mobilizing, building trust, sharing power and influence, developing people, and self-reflection.
- **The Myers-Brigg Type Indicator (MBTI®) Assessment**, which “gives you a framework for understanding yourself and appreciating differences in others”. It is one of the best-known personality type assessments (of which there are many).

### Adjusting leadership style to context

The “situational leadership” model of Hersey and Blanchard (1969) promotes the use of different leadership styles depending on the situation, rather than assume that one leadership style is always the best. Four different styles are commonly represented in a matrix, categorized according to degree of directive (task) and supportive (relationship) behaviour needed by followers (see Figure 1):

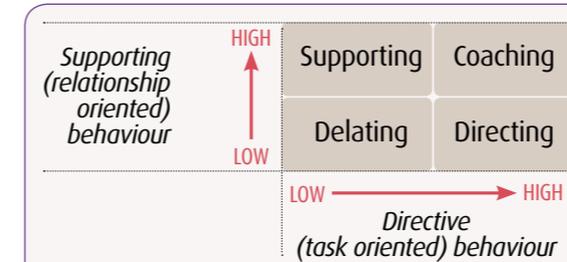


FIGURE 1. The Hersey-Blanchard model of leadership.

Hersey and Blanchard thus suggested that by adopting the right style to the followers’ development level, the work gets done, relationships are built, and the followers’ development level will improve.

The model has been criticized for confusing leadership and management, and not giving enough attention to the roles and activities of the “followers”. However, it has the advantage of simplicity, and is useful to use as a basis for reflecting on the type of relationship that exists in ARD partnerships, and how appropriate this relationship is in different situations.

**Directive leadership** is focused more on the task than the relationship. The leader defines the roles and tasks of the follower, and communication is largely one-way. For followers who lack competence but have enthusiasm.

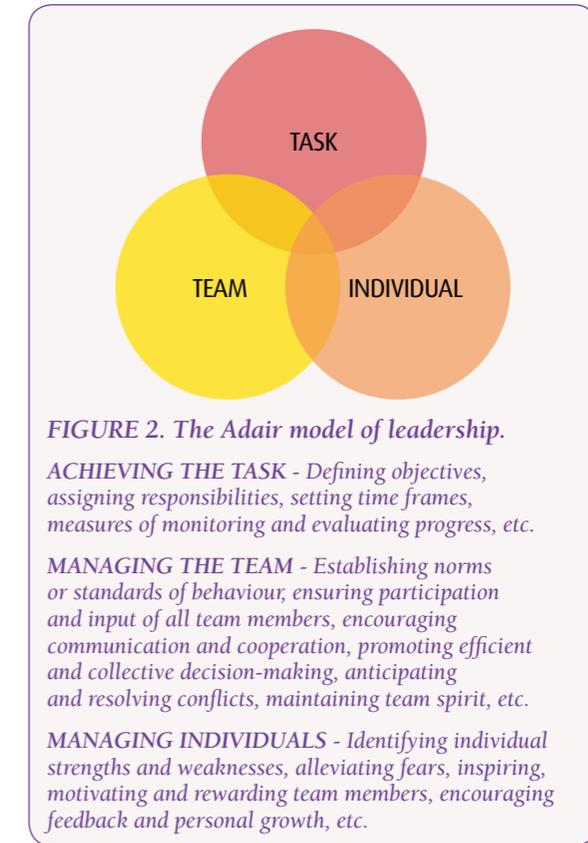
**Coaching leadership** is focused both on the task and the relationship. The leader still defines the roles and tasks but seeks ideas from the follower. Communication is more two-way. For followers who have some competence but lack commitment and need support to build their self-esteem and involvement in decision-making to improve their commitment.

**Supportive leadership** is focused on the relationship more than the task. The leader facilitates, but control is more with the follower. For followers with competence but lack confidence, so support is necessary to bolster confidence.

**Delegating leadership** is where the follower is more in control and decides how and when to involve the leader. For followers who have both competence and commitment.

### Ensuring task-team-individual functions

One of the better-known models for leadership is John Adair’s Action-Centred Leadership Model. It is often graphically represented by his trademark of three overlapping circles shown in Figure 2 representing the core management responsibilities of of task, team and individuals:



John Adair’s model is elegantly simple and neatly defines the three overlapping areas as not only important to leadership as such, but also to effective action by teams. Without clear planning (task focus), good communication (team focus), or motivated individuals, teamwork and ARD partnerships are destined to fail.

### Exploring team roles

Meridith Belbin recognized the diversity of team needs and described nine types of behaviour or team member that are needed to make up an effective team. Each of these team types has strengths and “allowable weaknesses”:

- **Coordinator:** self-confident, knows how to listen, promotes decisions - but is a bit manipulative;

- **Energy Source:** creative, source of ideas - but a bit impractical;
- **Implementor:** hard-working, logical disciplined - but can lack imagination, needs instructions;
- **Shaper:** positive, dynamic, pressurizer - but can be a bit polemic, bullies people;
- **Sweeper:** pays attention to detail, deadlines - but can worry about small things;
- **Specialist:** source of detailed knowledge - but can ignore wider issues;
- **Evaluator:** analytical, rarely wrong - but can lack imagination;
- **Resource Fixer:** extrovert, has many connections - but can be undisciplined, have a short attention span;
- **Councillor:** perceptive, promotes harmony - but can be indecisive.

The implication of these varied types is that no one (not even the leader) is perfect – but a team can be. Of course, individuals often display overlapping characteristics - not every team needs nine persons. A good leader is aware of the strengths of the different persons in the team or partnership and will try to ensure that these different roles are present when needed.

## Leadership and facilitation in PAEPARD teams

The PAEPARD project was designed assuming that effective ARD partnerships would require the services of independent, neutral “Agricultural Innovation Facilitators” (AIFs). Accordingly, one of the main project activities was to build the capacity of a core group of individuals across Africa that could undertake this role. Terms of reference for this role were developed, ARD partnerships (proposed consortia) who were given seed money to come together and develop project proposals to submit for (3rd party) funding were initially encouraged to nominate individuals who could undertake this AIF role, and several workshops were held to induct and build the capacity of these individuals.

In practice, it was not always easy for consortia partners to separate the different functions of leadership and facilitation (see *Box 1*). Some consortia used and appreciated the role of “neutral” facilitator provided with PAEPARD support in bringing public and private sector partners together and helping them establish a common agenda. In other cases, however, the AIF role was either not seen as necessary, seen as overlapping or clashing with that of partnership coordinator, leader or “principal investigator” (when a university or research organization had initially taken the lead in mobilizing the partnership). In spite of terms of reference for the AIFs being developed, the different tasks and competencies expected of them (mobilizing stakeholders, facilitating team meetings, identifying funding sources, drafting research proposals, building capacities, facilitating and documenting mutual learning) were not always clear to all involved, and probably overly optimistic.

In addition, the sustainability of the AIF role – what sort of organization they should come from, how can they be financed on a longer-term basis during any project implementation – remained an unanswered question. It was expected that such costs would be written into any research proposal, but this was generally regarded as infeasible. In common with other projects in Africa, the demand for services provided by professional innovation partnership facilitators is not yet fully recognized or regarded as a basis for a dedicated profession. The facilitation role in ARD partnerships is therefore taken up, if at all, by one of the organizational members of the partnership (e.g. the research organization, a farmers’ group, a local or international development NGO).

Perhaps the most successful PAEPARD consortia were those that had an energetic “champion” – or adaptive type of leader as described above. The Benin soybean partnership, for example, successfully used the services of an external facilitator to enable initial exchanges of views between partners, but it was the lead organization, the Soybean Association SOJAGNON, and in particular its dynamic and committed coordinator, who provided the leadership to this successful consortium. Ultimately it was this coordinator who played the role of project manager, as well as internal innovation broker/facilitator who communicated information to partners, fostered collaboration between African and European partner organizations, enabled knowledge co-creation, and built trust among the partners to ignite the innovation process as a whole.

Typically, the roles and types of leadership in ARD partnerships remain “tacit knowledge”. That is, they are well known to team members and partners, but rarely expressed, evaluated dispassionately, the overall argument of this brief is that – while difficult – paying more explicit attention to partnership, and better documentation of lessons learned, would benefit future ARD projects and partnerships.

(Sources: Stepmann 2016 and other PAEPARD internal reports)

BOX 1

## Experiences with brokerage / facilitation role in PAEPARD partnerships

- **IN BENIN**, the external facilitator was important in bringing different players together in the soybean value chain, as these were not used to collaborating.
- **FOR THE BURKINA FASO** *Trichoderma* consortium, the PAEPARD facilitator brought together research, agribusiness entrepreneurs and agricultural and non-agricultural business service providers.
- **IN THE COLEACP** mango waste consortium, “the role of the AIF was major... as private consultant, they were contracted for their knowledge of the mango industry and their capacity

to facilitate the process along the different steps. Their role stopped due to limited budget available.”

- **IN THE NIGERIAN** Poultry Feeds Research and Development consortium (NIPOFERD), the AIF were able to build a “wonderful camaraderie spirit in all participants” that gave the farmers enough boldness to air contrary views to those of the researchers when necessary; and at the end bonding resulted in fund-raising.

- **IN THE MALAWI** fish consortium, the AIF was not seen as useful. Rather, the consortium expressed a need for someone to link them to potential donors.

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# PAEPARD



## Executive summary

### **Agricultural Research for Development**

(ARD) partnerships face a number of leadership challenges, including achieving consensus and building trust among diverse partners and stakeholders. Leadership issues are rarely explored explicitly in ARD partnerships, and the various leadership tasks may not get the attention necessary or get confused with the more traditional roles of programme or project management.

**A facilitation role**, which may be taken on by external and impartial individuals (Agricultural Innovation Facilitators) or by an internal leader, requires a skills set that enables the smooth interaction of multiple actors; respects diverse opinions; and encourages reflection and co-creation of knowledge. A leader, in addition, needs to inspire

and build enthusiasm among the partnership members, as well as catalyse the necessary change of mindset and attitudes while also nurturing structures and organizational cultures that will be more conducive to the innovation process.

**In ARD partnerships** it is not always easy to separate the roles of leader, partner and/or project coordinator, facilitator, and of project manager. Different partnerships need to more explicitly recognise the various leadership tasks required, and then find the most appropriate ways of distributing these leadership tasks between team members. Considering the experience of PAEPARD, the ARD partnerships tend to be more successful when they have strong “champions” who adopt a collaborative or adaptive leadership style.

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