

What are Multi-Agency Partnerships and why are they important?

The process of technical change in agriculture in Africa has not been as rapid as many earlier projects hoped (Ruttan, 1975; Silberfein, 1989; Wiggins, 1995). In part this was because existing institutions were poorly adapted and often inadequately resourced in relation to their task. In particular, agricultural research was hierarchic and little attempt was made either to explore indigenous knowledge or to co-operate with farmers in the research process. One donor response was to promote reform of Government Research and Extension services. Although there have been many attempts to reform Government bodies, institutional resistance has meant that these have generally only moved forward slowly (Ruttan and Thirtle, 1989).

The 1970s and 1980s saw a significant growth in field-oriented organisations questioning existing systems of technology delivery and exploring new methodologies for diffusing innovations to farmers (Nindi, 1985; Ostrom, 1990; Yung, Bosc and Losch, 1995). During the 1980s it was increasingly realised that no single category of agency could in itself manage agricultural research and extension, if promotion of technical change in agriculture was to be effective at the local level.

The response was to explore the potential for co-operation between different types of agencies operating in this field. Essentially, there are five types of stakeholder;

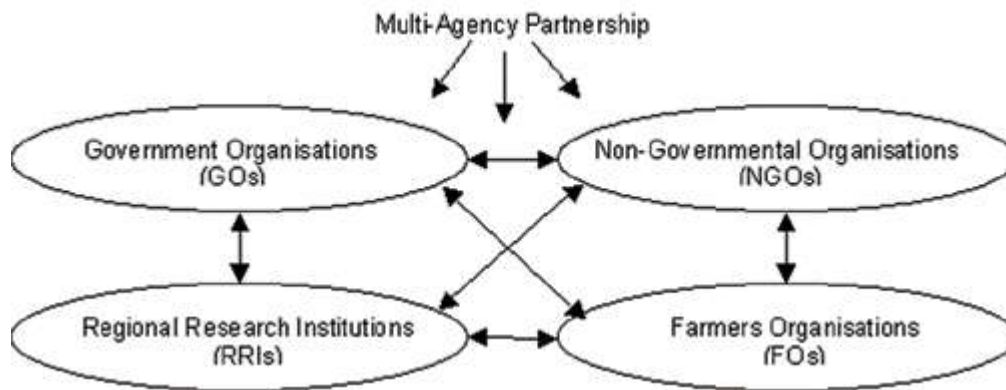
- Government Organisations (GOs)
- Regional Research Institutions (RRIs)
- Non-Governmental Organisations NGOs, Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) *and*
- Farmers' Organisations (FOs)
- Private Sector Service Providers (PSSPs)

There have been a variety of studies describing the process of technical change as managed by individual elements (see articles and references in WARDA, 1994; Winrock, 1993, 1994; Arnaiz, 1995; Byé and Muchnik, 1995). Each grouping has its advantages and demerits; a not entirely attractive element of NGO strategies was to attempt to bypass government.

As increasing numbers of players entered the field it became evident that a synergy would be created by working in partnership (Biggs, 1989). These Multi-Agency Partnerships (multi-agency partnership) are described in a country case-studies (e.g. Bebbington, 1989 for Ecuador; Diallo and Senghore, 1990 for Gambia; Henderson and Singh, 1990 for Gambia and Ethiopia; Copestake, 1990 for Zambia; Osborn, 1990 for Senegal; Musyoka, Charles and Kaluli, 1991 for Kenya; Bosc et al., 1995 for Senegal; Collion, 1995 for Mali).

A general overview is presented in Farrington and Bebbington (1993) and this has been followed up by fieldwork in India (Alsop et al, forthcoming), in Bangladesh (Lewis, forthcoming) and in five countries of Latin America (Bebbington, 1997).

An idealised model of the relations between the different agencies is presented in the figure. However, in reality, equitable multi-agency partnership is difficult to establish and monitor. Power relations between local-level NGOs/CBOs and GOs are unequal; they generally have differing philosophies, mandates, ethos, operating procedures, views on accountability, views on rural futures and links with international organisations. The challenge in promoting technical change at the local level is to exploit (even small) areas of overlap in their world-views sufficiently to allow the agencies to work together without neutralising the features that give each their comparative advantage.



Experiences indicate that greater success in diffusing technologies and in fostering sustainable development can be achieved if farmers actively help to diagnose local problems and participate in developing and adapting new technologies. This requires participatory modes of research and development in which decisions are made in accord with local resources and needs (Ashby and Sperling, 1994; Bebbington, Merrill-Sands and Farrington, 1994; Collion, 1995).

Farmers' organisations in West Africa are extremely diverse, in terms of scale/geographical level; gender balance; legal recognition; functions; access to information, training and technical advice; resources; internal decision-making; integration with the technical/economic/social environment. (Beaudoux and Nieuwkerk, 1985; Buijsrogge, 1989). Such organisations are often focused on either men or women; organisations dominated by men often have the connections to actively seek out funding or partnerships. It cannot be assumed that farmers organisations are able to make technology systems more responsive to the needs of low-resource members. Those organisations renowned for their "success" in the technology area tend not to represent the poorest farmers but have often received significant amounts of donor money (Carney, 1996).

Because most large and centrally administered public extension organisations are unable to respond to such bottom-up and demand-driven activities, the role of participating NGOs has increased in importance. NGOs focus on farmers' needs, stimulate community-based activities, use methods that prove to be effective, and contribute positively to development. They have a major operational advantage in the more fragile and often highly heterogeneous environments. These changes in institutional and methodological scenarios pose problems for any program to accelerate the diffusion of new technologies to farmers.

These changes in institutional and methodological scenarios pose problems for any program to accelerate widespread diffusion of new technologies to farmers. Governmental institutions, constrained by reduced funding, face difficulties in adopting more flexible and participatory ways of working with farmers. Many NGOs, now operating at local and regional levels, often intensively involve farmers and local communities in unconventional ways of testing and diffusing technology. Such practices often lead to gaps in communication and to friction between the organisations developing technology and those engaged in diffusion.

Close collaboration in research and development between governmental agencies and NGOs permits more accurate targeting of potential benefits to participants, more convincing demonstration of impact on farms, and earlier and better feedback to research on farmers problems and their response to research results. Recent projects on seed production in Senegal and on erosion control in Burkina Faso provide evidence of such benefits and impact (Speirs, 1991; Mercoiret, 1990; Osborn, 1990).

Although most NGOs do not engage in applied agricultural research, they are innovative in developing participatory research methods and in adapting technologies to local conditions. Most NGOs recognise the need for strengthened but more flexible and responsive governmental institutions in research and development. At the same time, NGOs seek to maintain independence. Some governmental institutions initially may view NGOs as competitors for attention and funds.

Experience from research and extension projects suggests that farmers' groups can play an instrumental role in the generation of appropriate solutions to small farmers' problems. Farmers groups are diverse and single purpose co-operative groups are often more effective than such as multi-purpose counterparts as expertise and management are performed more efficiently when all activities are linked within a production chain logic. Farmers, researchers and extension workers were engaged in constant dialogue to identify priority problems and to suggest possible solutions, based on the following principles:

- multidisciplinary;
- use of group approaches;
- on-farm development of technical innovations;
- assisting with removing the critical bottlenecks;
- empowerment.

From the point of view of external agencies, farmers' organisations are often expected to play one or more of the following roles:

- channels for innovation;
- actors in the process of innovation (supporting the creation of services to the producer, problem resolution, managing natural resources);
- organising production and marketing;
- take over financial responsibility for systems maintenance, etc.

The capacity of farmers' organisations to promote innovation will depend on their intellectual autonomy and leadership. The correlation between organisational autonomy and specialisation with effectiveness is less clear. At the regional level, the more successful groups can be characterised by intellectual autonomy, clear and explicit objectives, federation, meaningful links with the state and/or the rest of civil society. Problems persist especially where there is a divergence of views on strategy, the political environment is not favourable (national partners are not always easy to identify, and external partners may impose their own ideas), there are conflicts with movements at other levels.

Experience in Mali (Ohji, 1992; Collion, 1995) has highlighted significant communication problems. Researchers did not know how to present their activities and findings in a simple way, placing it in the farmers' frame of reference, and farmers' representatives had only a limited understanding of research and did not know what information would be useful for researchers.

NGOs can play an important role as facilitators and mediators between research and farmers' organisations, facilitating communications in general, and documenting the process. Significant training is essential, especially in communication techniques and on-farm participatory research methods, for which a specialised training partner will be required. Farmers must be involved at the national level of the decision-making process to ensure inclusion in crucial decision-making about resource allocation and long-term research priorities, and must participate at all stages of technology generation and in local level decision-making to establish common ground through joint work and genuine participation.

Nigeria presents a relatively unusual case in terms of the region as a whole. Extremely wealthy as a nation and with a large public sector, it has until recently been *terra incognita* for most NGOs, although there are extensive operations both by RRI's such as the CGIAR and large IBRD-funded Agricultural Development Projects. There is, however, an extremely lively spectrum of community development structures and agricultural innovation is often channelled through these (Francis, 1987; Netting, Stone and Stone, 1989; Phillips-Howard, Adepetu and Kidd, 1990; Reynolds, Domenico, Atta-Kruh and Cobbina, 1991; Eyoh, 1992; Martin, Rea and Anadu, 1995). In recent times, recession and the decline of donor assistance to Government has stimulated a growth in the internal NGO sector as well as encouraging more interest from external NGOs (Martin, Rea and Anadu 1995).

The most detailed surveys of local-level organisations in Nigeria and their relationships with the State and external organisations are Martin, Rea & Anadu (1995) and Francis et al. (1996). This latter is a detailed study conducted for the World Bank under the auspices of the Poverty Alleviation

Programme Development Committee (PAPDC). These reports found that local associations were thriving and were both effective and accountable since they were based around local decision-making. Government programmes, by contrast were virtually incapacitated by lack of resources, both human and financial and were failing to deliver services to communities. The paper advocates social and institutional analysis to try and create synergy between community institutions with increased capacity and a more responsive and accountable public service.

References

Adesina, A.A. and M.M. Zinnah, 1993. Technology characteristics, farmers' perceptions and adoption decisions: a Tobit model application in Sierra Leone. *Agricultural Economics*, 9:297-311.

Akinola, A. A. Young, T. 1985. An application of the Tobit model in the analysis of agricultural innovation adoption processes: a study of cocoa spraying chemicals by Nigerian cocoa farmers. Manchester: International Development Centre, Manchester University,.

Alsop, R. and Farrington, J. (forthcoming) 'Nests, niches and nodes: A system for process monitoring, information exchange and decision making for multiple stakeholders'. Accepted by *World Development*.

Altieri, M.A. and A. Yurjevic, 1989. The Latin American Consortium on Agroecology and Development: a new institutional arrangement to foster sustainable agriculture among resource-poor farmers. *Development Anthropology Network*. 7:17-9.

Andersson, J. A. 1996. Potato cultivation in the Uporoto mountains, Tanzania: an analysis of the social nature of agro-technological change. *African Affairs*, 95 (378):85-106.

Antoine, Pierre and Francis C. Byrnes, 1993. *Winrock's On-Farm Productivity Enhancement Program: Experience and Lessons Learned in West Africa*. Paper presented at Workshop on Developing African Agriculture: New Initiatives for Institutional Cooperation, Cotonou, Benin.

Arnaiz, M. 1995. Farmers' Organisations in the Technology Change Process: an Annotated Bibliography. *Agricultural Administration (Research and Extension) Network Paper 53*, Overseas Development Institute, London

Ashby J. & Sperling L. 1994. Institutionalising Participatory, Client-Driven Research and Technology Development in Agriculture, *Agricultural Administration (Research and Extension) Network Paper 49*, London: Overseas Development Institute.

Bebbington, A. 1989. *Institutional options and multiple sources of agricultural innovation: evidence from an Ecuadorian case study*. Agricultural Administration (Research and Extension) Network Paper 11, Overseas Development Institute, London.

Bebbington, A. and J. Farrington, 1993. Governments, NGOs and agricultural development: perspectives on changing interorganisational relationships. *Journal of Development Studies* 29:199-219.

Bebbington, A, Merrill-Sands, D. & J. Farrington 1994. *Farmer and Community Organisations in Agricultural Research and Extension: Functions, Impacts and Questions*. Agricultural Administration (Research and Extension) Network Paper 47, Overseas Development Institute, London.

Beaudoux, E. and M. Nieuwkerk, 1985. *Groupements Paysans d'Afrique*. L'Harmattan, Paris.

Biggs, Stephen D. 1989. *A multiple source of innovation model of agricultural research and technology promotion*. AGREN Network Paper No. 6. Overseas Development Institute, London.

- Biggs, Stephen D. & E. Clay 1987. Generation and diffusion of agricultural technology: a review of theories and experiences. In *Generation and diffusion of agricultural innovations: role of institutional factors*. Iftikhar, Ahmed and V. W. Ruttan (eds) 19-67. Aldershot: Gower.
- Bosc, P-M. et al. 1995. Organisations socio-professionnelles: innovations organisationnelles et institutionnelles et stratégies des acteurs - Le cas du département de Bignona au Sénégal. In *Innovation et sociétés: Quelles agricultures? Quelles innovations?* Byé, Pascale & José Muchnik eds. II: 63-76. Montpellier: CIRAD.
- Bratton, M. 1990. Non-governmental organizations in Africa: can they influence public policy? *Development and Change* 21:87-118.
- Buijsrogge, P. 1989. *Initiatives Paysannes en Afrique de l'Ouest*. L'Harmattan, Paris.
- Byé, Pascale & José Muchnik eds. 1995. *Innovation et sociétés: Quelles agricultures? Quelles innovations?* Montpellier: CIRAD.
- Carney, D. 1996. Formal Farmers' Organisations in the Agricultural Technology System: Current Roles and Future Challenges. *Natural Resource Perspectives 14*, Overseas Development Institute, London
- Collion, M-H. 1995. On Building a Partnership in Mali between Farmers and Researchers, *Agricultural Administration (Research and Extension) Network Paper 54*, Overseas Development Institute, London
- Copestake, J.G. 1990. *The scope for collaboration between government and private voluntary organisations in agricultural technology development: the case of Zambia*. Overseas Development Institute, London. Network Paper No. 20.
- Cowen, M. 1986. Change in state power, international conditions and peasant producers: the case of Kenya. *Journal of Development Studies*, 22(2):355-384
- Diallo, I. and T. Senghore, 1990. *Gambian farmers in partnership with research and development agencies for testing and adopting agricultural innovations*. c20p A 92 RRMG
- Francis, P.A. et al. 1996. *State, community and local development in Nigeria*. World Bank Technical Paper No. 336. Washington D.C: World Bank.
- Gamser, M.S. 1988. Innovation, technical assistance and development: the importance of technology users. *World Development*, 16(6):711-721.
- Gilbert, Elon 1990. *NGOs and agricultural research: the experience of the Gambia*. AGREN Network Paper No. 12. Overseas Development Institute, London.
- Goldman, A. Tradition and change in postharvest pest management in Kenya. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 1991, 8(1&2):99-113
- Gubbels, P. 1988. Peasant farmer agricultural self-development: the World Neighbors experience in West Africa. *ILEIA Newsletter* 4: 11-14.
- Henderson, P. and R. Singh 1990. NGO-Government collaboration in seed supply; case studies from the Gambia and from Ethiopia. *AGREN Network paper*, 14. London: ODI.
- Kaimowitz, D. 1993. The role of nongovernmental organizations in agricultural research and technology transfer in Latin America. *World Development* 21:1139-1150.

- Krebs P & Vogel J (1994), Birth of a Small Farmers' Group in Guinea, *Agricultural Administration (Research and Extension) Network Paper 50c*, London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Maradieux, M.C. 1990. *Les ONG Americaines en Afrique*. GRET/ORSTOM, Paris.
- Martin, A., Rea, G. and P. Anadu 1995. *Opportunities for developing assistance to the RNR sector in Nigeria through Nigerian NGOs*. Report by NRI to ODA.
- Mattee, A. & Lassalle, T. 1994. Diverse and Linked: Farmers' Organisations in Tanzania. *Agricultural Administration (Research and Extension) Network Paper 50b*, Overseas Development Institute, London.
- McClymont, D. S. 1982. An investigation into the communication of innovations among commercial farmers in Zimbabwe. 244p
- McCorkle, C. M. Brandsletter, R. H. McClure. 1988 *A case study on farmer innovation and communication in Niger*. Washington: Communication for Technology Transfer in Africa, Academy of Educational Development, 125p1718 RRMG
- Mekuria, M. 1994. Agricultural technology development and transfer in Ethiopia: challenges and experiences. *African Rural and Urban Studies*, 1(3):39-64.
- Mercoiret, M-R. 1990. *The role of farming organisations in developing and spreading innovations: the case of CADEF (Senegal)*. 13p
- Mercoiret, M-R. 1995. Peasant Organisations in Sub-Saharan Africa: Some Reflections on Progress to Date. *Rural Extension Bulletin 7*, University of Reading Agricultural Extension and Rural Development Department, Reading
- Merrill-Sands, D. & Collion, M-H. 1994. Farmers and Researchers: the Road to Partnership, *Agriculture and Human Values 11 (ii & iii)*
- Mills, B. Gilbert, E. 1990. Agricultural innovation and technology testing by Gambian farmers: hope for institutionalising on farm research in small country research systems. *Journal of Farming Systems Research-Extension*, 1(2):47-66
- Mkandawire, M. 1984. Customary land, the state and agrarian change in Malawi: the case of the Chewa peasantry in the Lilongwe rural development project. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 3(1/2):109-128.
- Musyoka, J. Charles, R.A. and J.W. Kaluli 1991. Inter-Agency collaboration in the development of agricultural technologies at National and district level in Kenya. *Agricultural Administration (Research and Extension) Network Paper 23*, Overseas Development Institute, London.
- Netting, R. McC. Stone, M. P. Stone, G. D. 1989. Kofyar cash cropping: choice and change in indigenous agricultural development. *Human Ecology*, 17(3):299-319
- Nindi, B. C. 1985. Agriculture change in Tanzania: with examples from Iringa region. *Transafrican Journal of History*, 14: 101-111
- Osborn, T. 1990. *Multi-institutional approaches to participatory technology development: a case study from Senegal*. Overseas Development Institute, London. Network Paper No. 13.
- Ostrom, E. 1990. *Governing the Commons: the Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

- Pyatt, N. J. 1991 *Interactions, relationships and change in forestry extension*. c100p F 1027 RRMG
- Reardon, T.A. T. Thiombiano and C.L. Delgado, 1988. L'importance des cereales non-traditionnelles dans la consommation des riches et des pauvres a Ouagadougou. *Economie Rurale* 190: 9-14.
- Reynolds, L. Domenico, C. di; Atta-Kruh, A. N. Cobbina, J. 1991. Alley farming in south western Nigeria: the role of farming systems research in technology development. pp.85-108. 00006031
- Richards, P. On the south side of the garden of Eden: creativity and innovation in sub-Saharan Africa. 1987, 11p
- Ruttan, V. W. 1975. Technology transfer, institutional transfer and induced technical and institutional change in agricultural development. In *Agriculture in development theory*. L.G. Reynolds ed. Yale university Press.
- Ruttan, V.W. & Thirtle, C. 1989. Induced technical and institutional change in African agriculture. *Journal of International Development*, 1(1):1-45
- Salih, M. A. M. 1987. *Agrarian change in the central rainlands: Sudan. A socio-economic analysis*. Uppsala, Sweden: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 178p6221 RRMG
- Silberfein, M. 1989. *Rural change in Machakos, Kenya. : A historical geography perspective*. Lanham, MD, USA: University Press of America.
- Simukonda, P. H. M. 1994. Integrated rural development in Malawi and socio-economic change: the Karonga project. *Development Southern Africa*, 11(3):283-300.
- Skjonsberg, E. 1988. *Change in an African village: Kefa speaks*. West Hartford, Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 271p BA Zambia
- Speirs, M. 1991. Agrarian change and the revolution in Burkina Faso. *African Affairs*, 90(358):89-110.
- Thirtle, C. Townsend, R. Zyl, J. van. 1995. *Testing the induced innovation hypothesis in south African agriculture: an error correction approach*. Washington, D.C. USA: Agriculture and Natural Resources Dept. World Bank, 31p R-IBRD WPS 1547
- Ton, K. & K. De Jong, 1991. Irrigation technology and social change: an analysis of the social variables of technology. *Journal of Developing Areas*, 25(2):197-206
- Whitehead, A. 1988, Distributional effects of cash crop innovation: the peripherally commercialised farmers of north-east Ghana. *IDS Bulletin*, 19(2):59-65
- Wiggins, S. Change in African farming systems between the mid 1970s and the mid 1980s. *Journal of International Development*, 1995, 7(6):807-848
- Winrock, 1993, 1994. *On-Farm Productivity Enhancement Program. Annual Report*. Winrock International Institute for Agricultural Development, Morrilton, AR. 72110-9537.
- Yung, J-M, Bosc, P-M. et Bruno Losch. 1995. Stratégies des producteurs et phénomènes d'innovation au Sahel. In *Innovation et sociétés: Quelles agricultures? Quelles innovations?* Byé, Pascale & José Muchnik eds. II: 273-284. Montpellier: CIRAD