



Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa

Strengthening Capacity for Agricultural Research & Development in Africa

SCARDA Outcomes

Volume 1 No. 3

October - December, 2009

SCARDA Lessons

One of the main lessons which emerged from the early stages of SCARDA implementation is that insufficient time was allocated to the initial stages of the institutional analysis in the focal institutions (FIs). This arose, in part, because priority was given to developing detailed activity plans which were required for the approval of the implementation phase. As such, it took longer to develop a common understanding of what the project was trying to achieve and how the FIs could engage in it most effectively. Insufficient attention was also given to the financial resources that the FIs would need to host training events and support learning platforms. It was assumed that most of these costs would be contributions in kind from the focal institutions. This was unrealistic bearing in mind the serious resource constraints under which they operate.

The change management plans adopted by some FIs takes into account the fact that the organization operates in an unsupportive policy environment and that evidence is needed to encourage policy makers to implement appropriate reforms; for example, by offering salaries and incentives that will attract high quality staff and reduce the high attrition rate that exists at present. Hence the focus on improving communication skills in order to promote enhanced information flows to policy makers and other stakeholders. However, it is recognized by organizations participating in SCARDA that the project cannot allocate resources to directly influence the external environment. The project relies on the participating organizations at every level to lobby for an improved enabling environment as part of their regular core activities. Experience has shown that this is a major challenge which must form part of a broader advocacy approach if it is to bring results.

targets of achievement during the institutional analyses and to integrate M&E more rapidly into the overall project management system.

Reports from implementing Sub-Regional Organizations indicate that in the new SCARDA Management System, planning, management of planned activities, and monitoring and evaluation of activities have been made easier. However, the roles and responsibilities of service providers were still indistinct in certain circumstances and needed to be clarified to avoid conflict and overlapping roles. Another lesson learned was that FIs have to be assisted with the development of their story telling and communication of the stories to their stakeholders. In addition, the farmer participatory research capacity strengthening workshops undertaken in the SADC have provided a mechanism for bringing together representatives from different partners in the agricultural innovation system thereby facilitating their mutual engagement. This will contribute to participatory institutional analyses and building the wider institutional networks and linkages for developing collaborative market-led research agenda that meets the needs of end-users. However, building strong research management systems is a process that may need a longer term intervention e.g. a minimum of 3 years for there to be a visible and lasting impact on the institution.

Cross-cutting issues have been highlighted during the ARM workshops in various SROs. Particular attention was given to placing change management as the underlying process governing the development and implementation of activity plans. As a result, there is now a growing recognition of the importance of change management as a concept and an increased understanding of how to apply change

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SCARDA in Brief:

- SCARDA is about change aimed at improving livelihoods
- SCARDA supports innovative systems approach to ARD
- SCARDA is about building capacity to build capacity for ARD
- SCARDA supports gender mainstreaming in ARD
- SCARDA directly addresses the FAAP principles under CAADP Pillar IV

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"There is now a growing recognition of the importance of change management as a concept and an increased understanding of how to apply change management principles to support beneficial change"

A growing body of evidence indicates that institutional learning is an essential pre-requisite to improved decision making by research managers and thus to beneficial institutional change. This is particularly relevant for capacity strengthening initiatives where behavioral change is often the key to success and where support needs to be sustained over relatively long periods of time. For these reasons, SCARDA has a strong learning orientation and this implies that the planning, monitoring and evaluation framework needs to be flexible enough to accommodate unpredictable change. An attempt has been made to achieve an appropriate balance between accountability and learning in the design of the project performance management plan. However, more could have been done to develop clear

management principles to support beneficial change. The SCARDA mentorship programmes executed during change management workshops have promoted the engagement of all levels of management staff of participating institutions. The change management workshops have bridged the gap between senior and lower level managers. In addition participation of senior management staff of research institutions is very critical since these are in position to advocate for favorable organizational policy changes.

Announcement:

DFID funding of SCARDA officially comes to an end on 30th June 2010. A 2nd Programme-wide Strategies & Lesson-learning (PSL 2) Workshop is scheduled to be held at the FARA Headquarters from 26–29 April 2010 to take stock of the experiences during implementation in order to inform a post-funding strategy. Views from all stakeholders are welcome.



Supporting Agricultural Innovation

There is growing interest in the application of innovation systems thinking to agricultural development. But there are also some concerns and reservations. Some view innovation systems as a useful concept that will play an important role in shaping agricultural growth and poverty reduction in Africa. Others feel that it may turn out to be a passing fad which will have little impact and will soon be forgotten. After all, it is argued, we have already



Group work at the SCARDA agricultural innovation systems workshop held in Lusaka, Zambia

had farming systems research and farmer participatory approaches. Neither of these has brought the benefits that were expected when they were first introduced. So why should innovation systems be any different, especially as the approach does not necessarily focus on resource-poor communities?

One definition of an innovation system is a “dynamic, multi-stakeholder partnership working together to develop and use technologies and processes to improve livelihoods”. Innovation can arise anywhere along the agricultural value chain. Research organisations can play an important

role in fostering innovation, but they may not be the main actors that drive it. Great importance is attached in innovation systems thinking to the facilitation of networks where several organizations may contribute in different ways to the development of a new product or process. Close attention is also paid to relevant policies, regulations and infrastructure which are likely to influence the success or failure of emerging innovations. All this means that innovation systems is a holistic approach with a broad institutional outlook and a clear view of the wider enabling environment.

What implications does this have for the SCARDA initiative? SCARDA is essentially about strengthening selected agricultural research and educational organizations in Africa through a coherent set of interventions that address key gaps in their capacities. Crucially, though, it aims to enhance the ability of these organizations to make an effective contribution to agricultural innovation in their respective countries. In order to be able to do this, the research and education organizations need to engage actively with other partners. They must also seek to influence the enabling environment to make it more conducive to the development and uptake of innovations.

During the inception phase of the project, the needs analysis in the ASARECA sub-region used an innovation systems framework. A briefing paper on agricultural systems innovation systems provided guidance on new partnership approaches and showed examples of where these have

been applied successfully. But it has taken time for innovation systems thinking to take root within the project. This situation is now changing. In the SADC/FANR, some of the research and education organizations have launched new initiatives in farmer participatory research. This has stimulated interest in innovation systems thinking. A similar development is taking place in CORAF/WECARD sub-region.

A workshop on agricultural innovation systems was hosted by the In-Service Training Trust of the Natural Resources Development College (NRDC) in Lusaka, Zambia from 2–6 November 2009. Case studies were presented from within and outside the region and other activities included a field visit, a film viewing and group discussions. Certain types of organization were not well represented, notably the government extension service. But a Task Group with broad membership was established and charged with developing an action plan for facilitating the emergence of an agricultural innovation system in Zambia that specifies activities, responsibilities and time limits.

Many participants said that the workshop was an “eye-opener”, and that they will incorporate innovation systems principles and frameworks such as a more demand-driven, multi-stakeholder, value chain approach into their research and training activities. Similar workshops are due to be held in Lesotho and Botswana in 2010 and there will be an opportunity to share experiences from the three countries during a project-wide lesson learning meeting in April, 2010.



Focus on SCARDA-ECA

SCARDA aims at strengthening the institutional and human capacity of African agricultural research and development systems to identify, generate, and deliver research outputs that meet the needs of poor people. SCARDA in the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in East & Central Africa sub-region (SCARDA-ECA) has four thrusts, viz.: *Thrust 1*: Strengthening Research Management capacity in the NARS, *Thrust 2*: Building capacity for quality research through short courses, *Thrust 3*: Developing and implementing a mentoring strategy and plan, *Thrust 4*: Analysis of demand for graduates of agricultural sciences

The implementation of SCARDA-ECA is managed by a six-member Project Management Team (PMT). The PMT consists of representatives from the three focal institu-

tions (FIs), two SCARDA focal persons - one from ASARECA and the other from the Lead Service Provider (LSP), Regional Universities Forum for Strengthening Capacity in Agricultural Research (RUFORUM) - and a representative from the Natural Resources Institute (NRI) in the UK. The idea of a PMT was mooted in 2008, as an articulation of the envisaged shared learning and responsibilities during



SCARDA-ECA Programme Management Team (PMT) meeting in Burundi in 2009

the implementation of SCARDA-ECA. The PMT collectively plans, manages, and reviews the implementation of SCARDA-ECA. It has the responsibility for SCARDA-ECA project deliverables as specified in the implementation plan and in accordance with the letters of agreement.

The PMT used a competitive bidding process to identify and contract expert service providers for each thrust. Thrusts 1 and 3 were awarded to People, Innovation and Change in Organizations (PICO) Team, Thrust 2 was awarded to the National Cereal Crops Research Institute (NaCCRI) in Namulonge, Uganda, and Thrust 4 to BT Associates, UK. By December 2009, the following had been achieved: demand analysis for graduates from faculties in Eastern African Universities; short course training for technicians on laboratory management and disease

diagnosis conducted for Institut des Sciences Agronomiques du Rwanda (ISAR), Institut des Sciences Agronomiques du Burundi (ISABU), Agricultural Research Corporation, ARC (Sudan) and some participants from Satellite Institutions (SIs) affiliated with Focal Institutions (FIs); first of two leadership/mentorship workshops for senior managers and young scientists conducted for ISAR and ISABU. The one for ARC is scheduled for the 4th Quarter, January - March, 2010.

A total of 34 young and mid-level scientists from the FIs and a few other ASARECA countries are undergoing training at master's level in various disciplines, including Plant Breeding, Horticulture, Animal Science, Agricultural Information and Communication Management, Research Methods and Range Management. The students are registered at five universities in East Africa and at the ARC, Sudan. Most of the students started implementing their approved research projects from mid-2009 after completing their first year of study.

SCARDA-ECA recognizes the need to enhance skills of students and academic staff beyond academic disciplines. In this regard, specific short courses have been organized for staff of FIs to enhance professional skills in the areas of proposal and scientific writing, Web 2.0 and e-content development, online statistics course and scientific data management.

Furthermore, to encourage proficiency in Information and Communication Technology, SCARDA-ECA provided a budget for purchase of a laptop for each of the M.Sc. students. Acquisition of laptop computers has immensely facilitated student learning and academic interaction. The students can now easily search and acquire literature over

The LSP has facilitated brokerage of partnerships between the service provider universities and experts in the region and beyond to teach specific courses and engage in mentorship programmes with young researchers, particularly SCARDA-sponsored M.Sc. students. The Masters students also engage in deliberate interaction with their PhD counterparts; some even share lecture hours and seminar sessions. This approach promotes a spirit of mentorship and responds to SCARDA-ECA's intention of enhancing quality of research and training.

RUFORUM and the PMT closely monitor progress of students' training through physical field visits, students' quarterly reports and presentations, and progress reporting by M.Sc. programme coordinators in the respective service provider universities. All these efforts are geared towards assuring quality and ensuring that students complete their studies within the stipulated duration of scholarship.

The masters training has undergone certain challenges that, through coordination by PMT and cooperation by the implementing stakeholders, have been adequately ameliorated. One of the key challenges was substitution of originally identified students by FIs.

'After receiving my laptop, I felt like my potential as a student had been unlocked'

This resulted in delayed registration and start of semesters in some universities. All service provider universities were very accommodative and worked with the students to settle them into programmes. A number of students from non-Anglophone countries experienced challenges of using English as a language of instruction. A modest budget was included in students' scholarships for English language support and to meet health-related costs.

The 2009 African Crop Science Society (ACSS) Conference in Cape Town, South Africa presented an excellent opportunity to showcase the SCARDA-ECA approach. The LSP mobilized resources to sponsor a total of five SCARDA students to the ACSS conference. All students made poster presentations on their respective research themes. A poster outlining SCARDA-ECA activities was also mounted by the LSP on behalf of FARA and ASARECA.

The NRI plays a backstopping role in the SCARDA-ECA implementation process. In the past fourteen months, NRI has delivered two crucial short courses to the FIs. The first was on planning, monitoring, evaluation and communication. Participants from the three FIs attended the course at a shared facility in

Kigali, Rwanda. The purpose of the course was to enhance capacity of FIs to deliver on their mandate.

One of the priority research objectives for FIs and SIs is to improve the management of pests and diseases using sustainable approaches for mitigating potentially adverse effects of crop intensification. NRI has long-standing expertise in Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America and has conducted training courses for researchers, agricultural extension officers, NGOs and farmers. The objectives of the course given to the FIs were to enhance their understanding of the IPM concepts and to provide them with information on the application of IPM principles and practices. On completion of the course, the expectation was that participants would have an enhanced understanding of:

- The role of IPM within sustainable agricultural development
- The importance of correct pest, disease and weed identification/diagnosis and accurate assessment of incidence as a basis for applying appropriate control measures
- The available range of pest, disease and weed control measures and when to

utilize them

- Safety issues and quality standards in relation to crop protection practices
- Where to access useful and reliable sources of information on crop protection, and particularly on IPM.

Benefits of SCARDA-ECA

The ASARECA network expanded to include Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Rwanda. As an extension of SCARDA-ECA Thrust 4, RUFORUM has commissioned a study on analysis of demand for graduates of agriculture in the SADC region (Malawi and Mozambique). Strengthening research management in Universities has extended to Tanzania, Uganda and Malawi. The engagement with NRI has facilitated RUFORUM to leverage extra resources for capacity building.

RUFORUM has initiated regional graduate programmes responding to demand-driven niche areas aimed at building capacity to build capacity in Africa. The programmes are M.Sc. in Research Methods, (Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya), M.Sc. in Agricultural Information and Communication Management (Egerton University, Kenya), PhD in Dryland Resources Management, (University of Nairobi, Kenya), PhD in Plant Breeding and Biotech-



SCARDA M.Sc. students at Makerere University receiving laptops from Dr. Wellington Ekaya (centre), RUFORUM, SCARDA Focal Person

the internet, communicate via e-mail and conveniently process course assignments. "After receiving my laptop, I felt like my potential as a student had been unlocked", said one student from Egerton University, Kenya.

nology, (Makerere University, Uganda), PhD in Aquaculture and Fisheries (University of Malawi, Malawi), PhD in Agricultural and Resource Economics (University of Malawi, Malawi), PhD in Soil and Water Management (Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania).



Fourth Quarter Activities

FARA Secretariat:

SRO Quarterly Planning & Review meetings (10 - 20 Feb 2010; 8 - 15 Mar 2010); Senior Management Team Planning & Review meeting (22 Mar 2010)

ASARECA:

Workshops

Mentoring of young researchers workshops: Sudan (1 - 5 Feb 2010); Burundi (8 - 9 Feb 2010); Rwanda (15 - 17 Feb 2010)

Short courses

IPM Short course, Sudan (18 - 22 Jan 2010); Moodle e-learning platform, Egerton University (11 - 14 Jan 2010); PMT meeting (16 - 17 Feb 2010)

SADC/FANR:

Workshops

Innovation systems workshops (Botswana: 17 - 19 Feb 2010, Lesotho: 29 - 31 Mar 2010); 2nd Agricultural Research Management, Lesotho (22—24 Jan 2010)

Short courses

Conflict management & team building: Department of Agricultural Research (DAR), Botswana (22 - 26 Feb 2010); University of Zambia (UNZA), Zambia (22 - 25 Mar 2010); National University of Lesotho (NUL), Lesotho (29 - 31 Mar 2010). Leadership & management skills: Botswana College of Agriculture (BCA), Botswana (22 - 26 Feb 2010). Resource mobilization: BCA, Botswana (1 - 5 Mar 2010). Financial management: Natural Resources Development College (NRDC), Zambia (17- 19 Mar 2010). PMT meeting (8 - 9 Mar 2010). Scientific Research Proposal writing: BCA, Botswana (1 - 5 Mar 2010). Packaging & communication of research information: BCA, Botswana (8 - 12 Feb 2010)

CORAF/WECARD:

Workshops

Orientation workshops & mentoring activities - Crops Research Institute (CRI), Ghana: 25 - 29 Jan 2010; Centre de Recherches Agronomiques de Loudima (CRAL), Congo: 1 - 5 Feb 2010; Institut d'Economie Rurale (IER), Mali: 1 - 5 Feb 2010; National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI), Gambia: 2 - 6 Feb 2010). Lesson-sharing sub-regional workshop on mentorship (Dakar, Senegal: 15 - 19 Mar 2010). Tracer study report validation workshop (Dakar, Senegal: 1 - 2 Mar 2010)

Short courses

Research proposal writing short courses (IER, Mali: 15 - 19 Feb 2010; NARI, Gambia: 15 - 19 Feb 2010; CRI, Ghana: 22 - 26 Feb 2010). Strategic planning & programming short course (CRAL, Congo: 15 - 20 Feb 2010). Marketing & public relations strategies short courses (CRI, Ghana: 22 - 26 Mar 2010; NARI, Gambia: 22 - 26 Mar 2010). Negotiation & fund-raising skills short courses (IER, Mali: 22 - 26 Mar 2010; CRAL, Congo: 22 - 26 Feb 2010). Focal Institute management meetings (22 Feb - 03 Mar 2010) PMT meeting (5 - 6 Mar 2010)

NRI:

PMT meetings: SADC/FANR (8 - 9 Mar 2010); CORAF/WECARD (5 - 6 Mar 2010); ASARECA (16 - 17 Feb 2010). Backstopping at short course and ARM workshops as indicated for the respective SROs above.



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