



## Inclusive Partnerships in Agricultural Research for Development

**- Workshop Summary -**  
**Prepared by**



**Steve Rochlin**  
**Yvonne Pinto**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> February 2010, GFAR and ILAC, with the support of AccountAbility, convened a group of global experts and local stakeholders in Nairobi, Kenya to increase understanding of how to connect research with development through partnerships. Discussions focused on issues, challenges, and good practices.

This summary report provides an overview of key discussion points and highlights from the workshop; and will feed into the GCARD 2010 discussions. The information provided here *should not be considered* as a record of formal agreement or commitments on the part of GFAR, ILAC or any of the participants.

In addition to this summary report, AccountAbility prepared a detailed meeting record, which is available at <http://www.cgiar-ilac.org/workshop/wip/outputs>.

## I. Introduction

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In advance of The Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD) (March, 2010), the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) was tasked to proactively engage and consult key stakeholders and experts on the following questions to inform the process and identify changes needed to move forward:

- What are the development needs where Agricultural Research for Development can play its role best?
- How best do we scale research to maximize development impacts?
- How can we develop more effective impact pathways designed to reach the poor?
- What investments, institutions, policies and capacities are necessary?

Drawing on the insights and learning from the regional consultations, GFAR identified 8 themes for discussion at the GCARD 2010. The ***Role and Value of Partnerships*** was one of the primary themes identified. There is a growing interest to prioritize and learn how to better utilize partnerships to stimulate research and innovations that translate into high impact development outcomes.

In February of 2010, GFAR and ILAC, with the support of AccountAbility, held a two-day workshop in Nairobi, Kenya on Inclusive Partnerships in Agricultural Research for Development.

The objective was to develop a common perspective for the way Agricultural Research for Development Partnerships should perform, and how to help advance and improve existing ones. Specific objectives of the workshop were to:

- Clarify the drivers, importance and value of agricultural research for development partnerships
- Present leading partnership practices to facilitate learning
- Build a collective view on expectations for the ways that partnerships should perform
- Agree on an action agenda to help advance both the formation of new, and the improvement of existing, agricultural partnerships.

Participants included a diverse set of international representatives from:

- Agricultural research institutions
- Farmer representatives
- Civil society organizations focused on agriculture for development
- Donors
- Experts in partnerships for development

Over two days, the interactive agenda included presentations, case examples, and group work focused on building common perspectives and recommendations for the GCARD agenda.

The Workshop Agenda covered the following topics:

- The Role and Value of Partnerships
- Changing Funding & Partnership Management Mindsets
- Roles and Perspectives of Different Actors
- Partnership Agenda

No single workshop could hope to provide an exhaustive review of the issues and opportunities related to agricultural research for development partnerships. Nor does this report represent a comprehensive set of findings and recommendations (for additional resources on partnerships, visit the ILAC website, <http://www.cgiar-ilac.org/workshop/wip/outputs>). Participants came with different views. While the report content comes from the discussions and insights of the participants, *the conclusions drawn represent the observations of the authors.*

The report is divided into three main sections. The first section summarizes what the authors see as the three major insights from the workshop. These include:

- A typology for agricultural research for development partnerships
- A framework to link and leverage partnerships to support agricultural development
- Where is the third?

The ensuing section summarizes these insights. The subsequent section provides a brief review of major commentary from workshop participants. The final section provides an action agenda for parties – such as the CGIAR and its network of research centers, national agricultural research agencies, national agricultural ministries, donors, agricultural development NGOs, farmer representatives, and other stakeholders to advance.

## II. Key Insights

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The intent of the Nairobi Workshop was not to achieve consensus among participants. Rather it sought to raise issues that might enable the organizers, led by GFAR, ILAC, and AccountAbility, to identify common themes, synthesize findings and make suggestions to enhance partnerships.

Much has been written about partnerships for development. Thus the objective is to identify areas that give a fresh perspective for agricultural R4D partnerships. To that end, two insights emerge from the Workshop. These relate to:

1. Partnership Typology
2. Partnership for Development Framework

## 1. PARTNERSHIP TYPOLOGY

The first key insight is to:

### ***1.1 Align the partnership with key stakeholder expectations***

Partnerships raise expectations. Whether intentional or not, they promise greater inclusivity, responsiveness, and sharing of authority – especially among those that feel disenfranchised from development outcomes. They promise an equitable distribution of resources, and the spirit of cooperation. They promise a means to circumvent inefficiencies created by political competition, bureaucratic inertia, and decision-making processes based on status rather than merit. Last but not least, they promise an innovative means to deliver holistic and impactful agricultural development outcomes.

One therefore finds a construct of an *ideal* partnership is:

- Widely **inclusive**, focusing on **building social capital** by engaging networks from the research, business, government, NGO, smallholder farmer (SHF), and rural communities
- **Organized** and **managed** in a flat, non-hierarchical manner with limited structures, policies, or bureaucratic inefficiencies, yet with extensive commitment to shared learning and innovation
- Democratically **accountable**, with equal voice and governance authority provided to SHFs and intended beneficiaries
- Driven by very clear **goals** and **objectives**, with clear, transparent understanding of the **value proposition** for each partner (i.e., an answer to the question, “what’s in it for me?”)

These are lofty expectations for any development institution. Yet, they are not unreasonable aspirations for partnerships. The challenge is that not all partnership structures are the same. ***Differing partnership structures possess different requirements of social capital, organization, and accountability.*** A key insight is that partnership types must better accommodate stakeholder expectations.

### ***1.2 There are at least three key partnership types***

The Workshop identified at least three types of agricultural R4D partnerships. These are partnerships to enhance:

- **Scientific discoveries** – focused on bringing together technical skills and knowledge bases to enhance R&D results
- **Coordination among development actors** – mobilizing disparate actors to jointly address challenging development needs through R4D

- **Advocacy** – bringing coalitions together to influence the allocation of resources (particularly financial) and public policies

The ensuing matrix identifies the typical requirements of inclusivity, organization, and accountability for each type of partnership. The subsequent analysis examines each of these requirements in turn.

**Figure 1: Partnership typology**

Type	Example	Inclusivity	Organization	Accountability
<b>Discoveries</b>	Partnership to develop drought resistant seed	Professionals (e.g., scientists)	Based on research methods and approaches	To the scientific community and donors
<b>Coordination</b>	a) Enhanced banana production b) Training for agricultural scientists	International NGOs, National NGOs, Donors, SHFs, Research Institutions, etc...	Numerous kinds of structures, designs & measures	Donors
<b>Advocacy</b>	[TBD]	International NGOs and National NGOs	Similar structure to that of the Associations	Donors

**The matrix shows that each partnership type possess different attitudes towards inclusivity.**

- **Scientific Discoveries:** These partnerships focus on organizing a collective of professionals with technical expertise. Such partnerships often engage a wide range of experts, especially scientists from developing regions. Workshop participants suggest that such partnerships ***could benefit from the greater engagement of beneficiaries, those who will ultimately utilize discoveries – e.g., SHFs – to generate greater yields and in turn create development outcomes.***
- **Coordination among development actors:** These typically include multiple development actors. In practice, one often finds:
  - **International NGOs** that attempt to share resources, networks, and technical knowledge with one another
  - **National NGOs** that attempt to use the partnership to work more effectively with international NGOs and to gain access to additional resource channels
  - **Research institutions** that attempt to use the partnership to better translate scientific discoveries into tools for agricultural development

- **Private sector entities** that play complex roles. Companies often participate in partnerships to enhance their reputation. However there is growing recognition that partnerships are a useful tool to achieve business goals. Often, other development actors view companies solely as donors and on occasion as conduits to disseminate vital technology
- **Donors** that are interested in testing whether partnerships are an effective means of advancing donor development ideas and agendas
- **Farmers, farmer representatives, and other beneficiaries.** Several Workshop participants felt that this set of stakeholders/ beneficiaries are not as involved in the partnerships as they should be
- **Government agencies** are rarely included in these partnerships, although Workshop participants suggest that their presence would strengthen partnerships
- **Educational institutions** should perform a vital role in training indigenous PhD and Masters' graduates. Educational institutions work to translate international discoveries into applicable products.. These institutions build effective extension programs, support SHFs, build understanding of the agricultural development system, shape public policy, and link all of these roles together. However, Workshop participants perceive educational institutions as falling short of their potential
- **Advocacy** partnerships typically focus on including stakeholders that can build persuasive arguments for donors and policy-makers. They often include international institutions. Several Workshop participants suggest *there is a dearth of effective advocacy partnerships. The ones that do exist would benefit from broader inclusivity.*

**Similarly, each partnership type takes a different approach to structure and organization.**

- **Scientific Discoveries:** These partnerships follow models consistent with R&D management. *These tend to incentivize and reward discovery rather than development outcomes.*
- **Coordination among development actors:** These partnerships are *the most difficult to manage.* No single model exists to structure such partnerships. A loose set of management processes are often stitched together. No two partnerships will look the same. Each partner possesses its own expectations and related goals. This means that each partner will measure success differently.
- **Advocacy:** These partnerships will often adopt the tactics used by political associations and campaigns.

**Possessing distinct forms of inclusivity and organization, it is no surprise that each partnership type possess different expectations of accountability.**

- **Scientific Discoveries:** These partnerships view themselves accountable to the strictures of the scientific method and the specific requirements of donors.
- **Coordination among development actors:** These partnerships find it difficult to decide to whom and what they are accountable. They can establish complex governance models used to balance power and ensure equitable distribution of resources, from partner to partner, partner to funder, and partner to SHF and other beneficiaries (and in some instances one may find links from funder to beneficiary). ***These partnerships require a complex framework of mutual accountability.***
- **Advocacy:** These partnerships commit to joint communications and collaborative advocacy. In principle they are accountable to the development interests of beneficiaries. However, in practice they may be accountable to more persuasive “proxies” such as research institutions, international NGOs, and donors.

The implication is that while each of these partnership types may intend to deliver impactful and holistic development outcomes, ***structural issues get in the way***. It is challenging to balance inclusivity, effective organization, and accountability. Partnerships focused on discoveries have great potential to work effectively and deliver outcomes. However ***without broader inclusivity and accountability other stakeholders may view researchers as too narrowly focused, with a lack of investment in working to turn discoveries into ‘real world’ products.*** . For example, SHFs seek support in developing a business plan that will allow them to use new technologies. Yet research scientists may find this out of their scope.

Partnerships that coordinate development actors can often become ***too focused on satisfying the interests of each partner***. Research scientists may become frustrated in such circumstances – viewing partnerships as ***too focused on processes of engagement rather than on producing tangible discoveries***. Donors and other partners can begin to view these partnerships as slow-moving. Yet once formed, incentives arise to keep relationships among partners positive. Few are willing to press-hard for changes.

Finally, it is ***hard to judge the performance of advocacy partnerships***. Few exist and Workshop participants often find them insufficiently inclusive and effective.

***The implication is to better link partnerships to a model of agricultural research for development.*** In this way, the type of partnership will better fit with key stakeholder expectations, more accurately focus its objectives, and better understand to whom the partnership should be accountable.

This is further explored in the subsequent insight.

## 2. PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Several Workshop participants suggest that too often, the agricultural research for development process relies too heavily on technology transfer. Even the most compelling new technology must run a gauntlet of obstacles before it achieves widespread adoption. Figure 2 presents a model of the agriculture research for development process that captures more dimensions than just the straight technology transfer approach, which several Workshop participants expressed frustration with.

**Figure 2: The agriculture research for development system**



Figure 2 presents a chain that often (but not always) begins with **R&D**. Viable discoveries then go into a **technology transfer** process. This requires efforts to engineer the discovery into a relatively easy and low-cost application, demonstrate effectiveness, raise awareness, and build channels to distribute the technology to users (often this is done through intermediaries).

The next stage is **commercialization**. This involves a variety of producers – from SHFs to large enterprises – that see the benefits of adoption as outweighing the costs. A variety of investment finance mechanisms are often required at this stage, from straight donations, to government subsidies (and preferential tax arrangements), to commercial and project finance. The commercialization of the technology should create economic value. It should also create broader economic development outcomes, such as greater food security, enhanced nutrition and job creation among others.

The final stage is **reinvestment**. Reinvestment can take several forms. It may focus on scaling up the successful technology. Or it may look to invest in the next generation of R&D, starting the R4D cycle anew. Alternatively, it may involve investment in complementary activities, such as advocacy to influence policies that favor the application of the new technology.

The reinvestment stage relies on feedback from **monitoring, measurement, and evaluation processes**. This ranges from assessing whether the new discovery lives up to its potential, to the cost-effectiveness of the technology transfer process, to its development impacts.

Typically the process is neither this simple nor linear. The presence of different stakeholders in the system creates a complex and dynamic process. For example, those involved in “commercialization” may try to shape the R&D and technology transfer process. Those involved in reinvestment may use a range of criteria – some scientific, some political – to determine whether an approach is effective or not. The internal hub and spokes inside the wheel of Figure 2 reflects this dynamism.

In this regard, partnerships should strive to ***make the stages of the development process more effective*** by:

- ***Improving inclusivity, and related connectivity***
- ***Increasing effectiveness through better organization***
- ***Strengthening accountability and making the process and metrics transparent***

Partnership types remain viable. However they must become better linked and leveraged.

### **2.1 Partnerships should *make the stages of the development process more effective***

Figure 3 presents a modified matrix, to present a framework for how partnerships should enhance the development process.

**Figure 3: Making R4D partnerships more effective**

Type	Primary Link to Development Process Stage	Inclusivity	Organization	Accountability
<b>Discoveries</b>	R&D Technology Transfer Reinvestment	Professionals (e.g., scientists) SHF and other beneficiaries NGOs that effectively represent beneficiaries	Based on research methods and approaches Applying the latest product development processes that emphasize user input	To user needs To development objectives To scientific methods and donors
<b>Coordination</b>	Technology Transfer Commercial-inaction Reinvestment	SHF and other beneficiaries Researchers International NGOs, National NGOs Donors, SHFs, Research Institutions, etc...	Define clear, and common metrics for performance and build measurement and incentive systems that emphasize continuous improvement	Metrics of performance SHF and beneficiaries “Mutual accountability” that includes donors
<b>Advocacy</b>	Commercial-inaction Reinvestment	SHF and other beneficiaries Researchers International NGOs, National NGOs Donors, SHFs, Research Institutions, etc...	Adopts the organizational structure of Associations	Objectives that support the goals and metrics of the R&D, technology transfer, and commercialization process SHF and beneficiaries “Mutual accountability” that includes donors

Partnerships focused on **scientific discoveries** perform vital roles in the R&D and Technology Transfer stages of the process. They should be more involved in Reinvestment to gain deeper perspective on how discoveries are applied and where improvement and next generation technologies are needed.

Too often workshop participants see such partnerships as focused on a “push” model. These partnerships must become ***more attuned to the choices that SHFs make and respond to their needs***. This argues ***for greater inclusivity of SHF, organizations that effectively represent them, and other beneficiaries***.

Doing so means ***modifying the management processes that such partnerships use***. Workshop participants urge partnerships to learn from the leading product development and innovation processes used by top companies. Increasingly, innovative firms undertake ***extensive outreach and study end-users and targeted beneficiaries to shape the discovery and technology transfer process***.

This in turn means changing expectations to whom and for what scientific discovery partnerships will be accountable. It means making these partnerships ***accountable first and foremost to user needs and development objectives***.

**Partnerships that coordinate development actors** are crucial to the success of R4D, because they perform vital roles from the Technology Transfer stage through the

Reinvestment stage. As such, it is important for these partnerships to connect with their fellow partnerships who are focused on scientific discoveries and advocacy. Yet, both a strength and weakness of such partnerships is their inclusivity. Partnerships that continue to grow can become too unwieldy.

For these partnerships, certain stakeholders should become ‘more equal’ than others. Again, SHFs and other beneficiaries should have a central place.

The main challenge for this kind of partnership is to **build a more effective organization**. Workshop participants expressed concern that such partnerships **should not take on the structures and characteristics of typical development institutions**. They look to them to maintain flexibility and fluidity.

A solution is for this kind of partnership to invest greater time and effort to **define clear and common metrics for performance and then build measurement and incentive systems that emphasize continuous improvement**. Donors should tie resource allocation not only to how well the partnership is able to deliver against these metrics, but how well the partnership **designs processes to share resources and mobilize the capabilities of each partner to advance towards targeted results**.

A related challenge is to more clearly define what this kind of partnership is accountable for. Donors can help by **reinforcing expectations that the partnership will be accountable to performance metrics**. In addition, **partnership governance systems should give a prominent voice to SHFs and other beneficiaries**. This should all be structured around a clear, written **“mutual accountability” compact that sets expectations for partners to advance the goals of the partnership** (rather than seeking ways to serve their own organization’s interests).

**Partnerships focused on advocacy** create an enabling environment that ultimately supports Commercialization and encourages Reinvestment.

This kind of partnership will benefit from including a broad range of stakeholders. While it may be difficult to coordinate and mobilize SHFs and other beneficiaries along with researchers and NGOs, **the more these constituencies align the stronger advocacy platforms will become**.

Advocacy partnerships do not need to modify their structure and approach. Rather **they need to expand participation**.

This in turn suggests broadening and deepening to whom and for what advocacy partnerships are accountable. It means deepening the focus on supporting the objectives of relevant scientific discovery and development coordination partnerships. It also means giving stronger voice to SHF and other beneficiaries in the governance process.

## Giving stronger voice to SHFs and other beneficiaries.

While Workshop participants are clear in their recommendation that partnerships should better engage and respond to the needs of SHFs and other beneficiaries, they are less clear in the best methods to do so. This is a challenge that bedevils every arena of international development. No tested solutions exist. However, a few emerging approaches hold promise. These include:

***Hold partnerships accountable for responding to beneficiary needs, rather than including beneficiaries at the table.*** This is a subtle and potentially controversial suggestion. Experience and research show very mixed results in bringing SHF and other beneficiaries to the governance table. Farmer and community organizations have mixed records representing beneficiary interests at this “table” as well. More have begun to experiment with developing means to collect data on preferences, priorities, needs, and expectations directly from the source. The Partnership is then in a position to build an effective response, and include beneficiaries in participatory evaluation processes, making the process more accountable. The private sector – with several decades of applying “voice of the customer” processes – is a useful source for good practice lessons.

***Train beneficiaries to participate in partnership governance.*** An alternative route is to train SHFs and beneficiaries to participate more effectively in partnership governance processes.

***Bring beneficiaries together to co-design the change model.*** While the partnership is in the planning stage, convene SHFs and other beneficiaries to design the partnership’s mission and change model.

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### III. Summary Review of the Nairobi Workshop

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The Workshop covered the following topics:

1. The Role and Value of Partnerships
2. Changing Funding & Partnership Management Mindset
3. Roles and perspectives of different actors
4. Partnership agenda

This section summarizes the major themes from the discussion for each topic.

#### 1. THE ROLE AND VALUE OF PARTNERSHIPS

*“The end is not partnerships...there is a bigger picture.”*

*“There is...a real need to define exactly what we mean by partnership. It seems that we need several models of what an effective partnership looks like in order to serve different contexts, needs and circumstances. Currently we are going round and round, and are not getting anywhere.”*

*“Partnerships really are a pain and that is something we need to acknowledge. However there is a reason we accept the pain. We do it because can’t do it alone.”*

The Workshop focused first on identifying the role and value of partnerships in R4D. Major themes from the discussion include the following.

- ***It’s important to clarify the definition and typology of partnerships***

Agricultural R4D partnerships use collaboration to produce transformative innovations that catalyze inclusive economic development. They seek to help generate discoveries that are adopted at scale benefit, by pulling together resources to achieve what one party could not achieve on its own.

R4D partnerships should not, and in practice do not, remain static. Different participants in a partnership become more or less relevant at different stages of a partnership. Participants find there is more than one type of partnership that perform different roles and require specific capabilities to succeed.

- ***We know very little about development partnership effectiveness.***

Participants see partnerships as a valuable tool to deliver R4D. However many express concern that partnerships take on a life of their own and are viewed as “an end” rather than a means for development.

The evidence regarding the performance of partnerships is mixed, though there is a spotty but increasing record of success. The quality of the research on partnership performance needs to be improved.

- ***We know very little about how to make partnerships work***

Though there are numerous reports that provide advice, making partnerships work isn't easy. The usefulness of current guides is put in question. This is because they don't help with the more subtle and difficult governance, accountability, and relationship challenges that partnerships face in practice.

For example, there is a strong rhetoric of engaging beneficiaries. However, we lack the evidence to support the claim that approaches to engage those on the ground are effective (or not) and if these models are delivering sustained development impact.

The following dilemmas make partnerships challenging to manage:

- *Who is really in charge?* Partners compete for status and leadership around:
  - Decision-making authority
  - Allocation of resources
  - Using cultural and political status to achieve prominence
  - Control of information
- Financial Management *The tent is too big*: When too many stakeholders join a partnership, there is often no real way to resolve differences or disputes. Partnerships often don't have an adequate way to reach consensus.
- *Too much process*: Process for its own sake can lead to bureaucratic busy-work that makes participation too great a burden.
- *Partnerships build strategy through compromise*: This typically manifests in two ways. One is when partnerships outpace the strategy and mission of participants. In this case, a participant may become concerned that the partnership will put their organization in a compromising position. The other is when the partnership exhibits "mission creep" and risk becoming a direct competitor to participants.
- *Who knows how to run a partnership?* There are few programs on managing partnerships. Most who lead them experience on-the-job training.
- *What happens when stakeholders say "No!"?* There is an impression that a multi-stakeholder partnership *de facto* represents the concerns of beneficiaries. In reality, partnerships can neglect or ignore the voice of beneficiaries, implementing solutions that beneficiaries say they neither want nor need.
- *How do you measure it?* How to measure whether a partnerships is more effective than alternative approaches?
- *When you are accountable to everyone, you are accountable to no one*: Ironically, when a partnership makes the effort to be accountable to donor, organizations, beneficiaries, and others sometimes the less accountable it becomes.

- *Partnerships are often laden and burdened with extreme expectations: Equality within a partnership is almost impossible to achieve.*

### Role of Partnerships

A synthesis of participants' views suggests the following roles for R4D partnerships.

Partnerships should focus on any one of the following three areas:

- Collaborative efforts to develop research innovations
- Realizing synergies among R4D actors
- Becoming a force to negotiate and influence the broader policy environment that is central to advancing R4D

The unique value partnerships possess is their ability to:

- Deliver creative opportunities for development
- Share tasks, responsibilities & resources
- Create synergies
- Avoid duplication of efforts
- Enhance knowledge exchange & sharing of lessons learnt
- Increase benefits for all stakeholders
- Enhance the legitimacy of R4D efforts by engaging a variety of stakeholder voices

However:

- Partnerships are also often very painful
- Farmers have high degrees of cynicism towards R4D partnerships
- Partnerships must be prepared to survive and adapt if they initially confront failure

Participants ask:

*Can we find a common agreement as to how partnerships can best benefit the Agricultural Research for Development Agenda? And, to make partnerships even more effective and impactful, what are implications for future funding models? How best to guide, structure and leverage partnerships for the Agriculture Research for Development agenda, going forward?*

## **2. CHANGING FUNDING & PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT MINDSET**

*"We reviewed our grants policy. 348 grants were assigned to research. How many people were brought out of poverty? None. There were a lot of outputs and technology generated papers and reports. But we found nothing about the amount of poverty reduction"*

*“Innovation requires adoption...which means that we need different types of systems. The questions becomes then: ‘what systems are we trying to influence and how do we use participatory processes for that?’”*

*“Today we lack the training, and don’t have the skills that managing a partnership requires”*

*“In order to try and follow the correct trend we all have our token ‘farmer’. It is a nice relationship and experience, and does generate valuable learning; but we are far away from engaging farmers i.e. putting them at the center, not of the partnership, but the research agenda. So what are we going to do about this? The goal is to re-focus agriculture research.”*

Workshop participants see a need for those in the R4D community to approach partnerships with a **new mindset**. Currently workshop participants:

- Are not confident that agricultural research currently produces the right products (i.e., research discoveries) for farmers;
- Find that the information produced from research collaborations is in the language of the researcher, not the farmer;
- Identify a gap between research and extension that inhibits the adoption of discoveries;
- Find that too much research stays on the shelf;
- Note that while farmers do research on their own, their contribution to research is often overlooked. They suggest that researchers work with farmers to strengthen the research process;
- Suggest Research and Development institutions must change their role mechanics of engagement.

Participants suggest that a new mindset should concentrate on three areas:

- Partnership Design
- The Role of Donors
- Partnership Management

### Partnership Design

Workshop Participants find that partnerships are too narrow and linear. Those forming partnerships need to think systemically while putting SHFs at the core of partnership design.

R4D partnerships should therefore seek to influence a variety of complex systems that shape whether a discovery turns into an innovation that supports inclusive agricultural development at scale.

Partnerships should *reflect* complex research, political, and economic systems in their design *in order to better influence them* and strengthen the flow of Research to Development. Partnerships need to start by focusing on more than what Workshop participants currently perceive they do on rural poverty alleviation. Given current events – such as volatile food prices and concerns over food security, participants observe a decoupling between research that increases agricultural productivity and research that increases income. Participants suggest this means gaining better understanding of food systems and of all partners, including the CGIAR itself, by:

- Focusing on pro-poor development rather than on pure research. Doing so means using Partnerships to strengthen the interest of farmers, and understanding that when considering agricultural R&D, farmer needs may relate more to D(evelopment) than R(earch)
- Structuring partnerships in a way that focuses on identifying what farmers want and need. This requires mechanisms to engage farmers and ensure they are not, in the words of one participant, “to be intimidated by scientists with PhDs.” To this point, participants suggest:
  - Farmers need to drive the agriculture research agenda. For example, this is the case in Australia & Canada, and it is starting to happen in Latin America
  - Engaging with and creating (where none exists) farmer organizations to help identify issues and needs
- Framing Partnerships around Food Systems – understanding the value chain from plow to the plate
- Focusing on policy that shapes the competitive landscape for food systems and the industry actors that serve them
- Exploring new ways to see how research fits into the food value chain;
- Building a coalition of big food, wholesalers, retailers, SHF, development NGOs, and policy makers by bringing these actors to the same table
- Addressing issues of agricultural industry concentration
- Using the strengths of the international system of the CGIAR to allow for SHFs and local agricultural actors to gain equal footing with larger industrial actors
- Understanding and influencing broader public policy, the regulatory environment and core infrastructure (roads, trade policy, energy distribution, etc.) conditions (often through advocacy). To this point participants suggest:
  - It is crucial to strengthen the link with government and to inform national agendas
  - That public policy issues are too often regarded as external to R4D processes. This is viewed as a mistake. Participants urge for more proactive engagement of national and sub national authorities in order to ensure impact
  - As an implication, participants suggest that R4D partnerships need to enhance their capabilities in social science research along with basic science.

Last but by no means least, this means utilizing partnerships as a vehicle to balance power dynamics in the system and to become more accountable to the needs of SHFs. In part this means, in the words of one participant, “breaking the linearity of the CGIAR to-researcher-to farmer design of R4D.”

### Role of Donors

Donors have a vital role to play in turning this new mindset into a reality. Donors should design incentives for research to embrace pro-poor development, engage more actively with farmers, and approach research with the full system of the agricultural value chain in mind.

Many participants find, as expressed by one individual, that:

*“Partnerships success lies in prioritizing issues. Today this process is not well defined. Often donor’s interaction is limited to giving money for a proposal. Too often there is not enough clarity as to the understanding of the real needs that the proposal should deal with. Hence, partnerships should be given and allowed the time to invest in the identification of real needs, and investigate those in order to develop a proposal that would bring about real change by pursuing effective processes and solutions.”*

In addition:

*“The way funders are currently coming up with selection criteria for partnerships is making the whole process dysfunctional. Going forward they need to be separate from the research role. For GCARD, funders continue to set broad goals, and acknowledge that there are means of verifying them through researchers and partners, but let’s convince them to accept partnerships as a criterion to achieve the goal.”*

Therefore, the approach donors should take would include:

- *Creating incentives to ensure farmers are at the center of partnership design*
  - All stakeholders must own the product of collaboration. Yet participants perceive that “99% of partnerships cases do not have farmers at the center.”
  - There needs to be more back and forth between donors and the partnership. Partnerships should seek information from beneficiaries and give feedback to donors in order to re-prioritize needs, making the process more dynamic.
- *Steering the direction of partnerships without micro-managing*
  - Donors should establish criteria for partnership performance
  - Donors should set broad goals, and verify progress. They should encourage the partnership to be clear about results
  - Donors should require partnerships to identify their change model and related performance metrics
- *Patiently supporting the institutional development and capacity building for partnerships*

- Donors must understand that by supporting partnerships they are in a sense supporting the creation of a new kind of flexible institution. This institution needs support to ensure it is managed effectively.
- Trust is vital to the success of partnerships. Donors need to help partnerships develop trust as a core asset. Trust comes from a combination of accountability, changed behavior, institutional cultures and relationship building that yields mutual respect.
- Partnerships need support to build their capacity.
- *Behaving as much as possible as a partner themselves*
  - Donors can find themselves in an awkward position. They are at once a partner and overseer. In practice this can give donors significant power where they become the first among equals in the partnership. As a result, donors need to define clearly how they are accountable to the other partners.

### Partnership Management

Participants suggest that R4D partnerships are not performing optimally because they are not:

- Engaging farmers
- Thinking systemically about the agricultural development value chain
- Building effective management processes

Participants suggest that to improve performance partnerships should:

*Be clear on exactly what results they want and have a plan to achieve these results*

Partnerships should specify what participants call “impact pathways.” I.e., how will the outcomes of the partnership constructively affect the development value chain? “It is about the relevance of a solution, the demand for it, a robust process and steps to go achieve needed change.”

*Set clear performance targets, metrics, and key performance indicators from the outset*

“Indicators often stop at how seeds are distributed and to whom, but how many lives were touched doing so?” Evaluation tends to stop short of understanding impact. As one participant states, “We need to steer away from the generic, obvious parameters we use....There are impact pathways that need to be assessed. Indicators need to capture development, gathering evidence to showcase what works in what context and circumstances; and what doesn’t work.”

*Build flexible management processes that emphasize relationship building, learning and continuous improvement.*

Participants suggest that individuals tasked to manage partnerships have more influence over a partnership’s success than any other actor. Partnerships need more attention to building effective capacity and management processes. They require allocation of

sufficient resources including money and the right skills. This means investing time and effort in pre-partnership planning processes.

Figure 4 provides lessons learnt from specific cases presented by CARBAP (a partnership to increase banana and other produce yields in West Africa), RuForum (a partnership to increase the number of individuals with advanced degrees in agriculture) and DURAS (a French donor supporting R4D partnerships).

**Figure4: Lessons learnt from the field**

Lessons Learnt		
CARBAP	RuFORUM	DURAS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask, “What innovations are appropriate for users?”</li> <li>• Ask, “How to better align innovations to diverse needs?”</li> <li>• Prioritize improving the communication and social capital among farmers, donors, researchers, and NGOs: engage groups and create a device for dialogue and evaluation</li> <li>• Institutions adopt approaches based on learning</li> <li>• Allow participants to specialize according to their knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success depends on quality of implementers               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Strengthen institutions and not individuals</li> <li>○ Identify champions</li> <li>○ Provide education on how to apply research</li> <li>○ The right incentives make a big difference. Current incentives discourage innovation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Northern institutions often drive partnerships. Southern institutions should be in the lead</li> <li>• Partnerships are lacking transparency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is difficult to involve beneficiaries in the proposal process. Same with small NGO’s. But they must be involved.</li> <li>• We need better tools to support partnership design</li> <li>• Don’t make objective too ambitious</li> <li>• There are too many partners, with too few coordinators</li> <li>• Create direct linkages between researcher - community – farmers</li> <li>• Define roles and responsibilities according to capacity</li> <li>• Build capacity of farmers on research</li> </ul>

Partnership Governance and Accountability

*Accountability. Accountability. Accountability.*

Participants suggest that partnerships cannot succeed unless they possess a governance system that holds each partner accountable for contributing to success, according to well-specified goals, objectives, and measures. Defining the terms of accountability addresses potential issues of trust and concerns of power imbalance. This means:

- Making a commitment to transparency of communications, reporting, and disclosure of information. Participants see transparency as the root of accountability.

- From a defined set of objectives, establishing mutual accountabilities from one partner to another and to the partnership as a whole. Beneficiaries, NGOs, businesses, donors, and government agencies will all be mutually accountable.
- Creating a governance system that holds everyone involved in the partnership accountable to what has been agreed at the outset.
- Measuring performance and sharing data.

### 3. ROLES AND PERSPECTIVES OF DIFFERENT ACTORS

*“It is telling to hear a farmer say his best form of income was attending workshops!”*

*“We should not expect researchers to go to the farmer. They should stay in the lab, but indeed need reliable feeders that bring relevant information up to them.”*

*“Researchers aren’t the best individuals to help in building partnerships. Their performance isn’t evaluated in relation to how well they engaged or built partnerships. The number of ‘innovations’ they come up with, and the number of articles they write about judge researchers. It’s hard to find one, a researcher, who is building a collaborative process.”*

A key learning from The Workshop is to better define the roles and responsibilities of partners. Participants see partners as “too captured by our institutions.” Partners, and by extension partnerships, lack vision for the larger system and this impacts R4D.

Partnerships need to focus on the entire system; from plow to plate. They need to define how farmers can afford to buy the research, and make sure there’s a market for them to sell into. Partners must better represent farmers. Partnerships must build the capacity of SHFs and community institutions to engage in R4D partnerships.

In this regard, participants discussed the roles of:

- Researchers & the CGIAR
- Farmers
- Government
- Civil Society
- Private Sector
- Education Institutions

(The role of Donors is discussed in the previous section).

#### Researchers

*“A question we faced was; ‘if the farmers call the shots, will the researchers have the same reaction?’ Some researchers indeed found it very difficult to take orders from*

*farmers, and farmer organizations due to the role reversal. But scientists unfortunately have to swallow their ego, and they did."*

Many participants agree that farmers need to hold more influence over the research agenda. However, participants differed in their view of how researchers should adapt their role.

Several suggest that researchers need to build the skills to reach out to farmers. This entails building the competencies of social science researchers and professional consumer marketing analysts.

Others rebut that this is too much to ask of scientists. Instead they suggest others should conduct outreach. Scientists should factor and interpret results of such outreach into their plans.

One way or another, "... there needs to be more communication. Partnerships can help to disseminate...information. The information is there but often in the language of the researcher. The farmer will not adequately use it."

Going forward, participants suggest that:

- If we do not ask researchers to perform as "change agents," partnerships must establish individuals that can work as intermediaries between the farmer and researcher. These intermediaries should translate and interpret information back and forth between both parties. They should aid plans for extension efforts. They should provide feedback on results and emerging needs to researchers.
- NARS and related regional, and sub regional research forums need to expand what is currently "extremely weak" private sector involvement and ad hoc NGO and farmer organization involvement.
- In general research partnerships need to:
  - Strengthen the involvement of weak stakeholder groups
  - Strengthen researcher institutions in social science research competencies
  - Assess customer satisfaction as a core measure of success
  - Map out social capital needs along the impact pathway
  - Plan for targeted capacity building
  - Hold senior CGIAR leaders accountable for both partnerships and research outcomes
  - Invest in maintaining or developing partnerships
  - Ensure data ownership policies are supportive of partnering
  - Reward and recognize partnering activities
  - Hold researchers accountable for partnerships that lead to outcomes

## Farmers

*“Going forward farmers need to be in charge of research. We need strong national agendas that aim to address and solve problems and that put farmers at the center of the research activities. In Australia or Canada farmers drive the agenda because they are paying for it.”*

*“There is a lot of cynicism by farmers concerning outsiders coming into their villages saying “we will help you”. How can you develop the trust to develop solutions just walking into town? When do we start and begin engaging farmers in the partnership? And how? “*

Participants observe that partnerships often exclude SHFs, or keep them far from the center of decision making and agenda setting. “Everyone talks about bottom up development, but we are far from that” one participant states.

Farmers increasingly send the message, ‘*don’t train us again.*’ Instead, farmers want access to credit, to markets, and improved infrastructure such as better roads. There is a need for a change of mindset to understand that “farmers have much knowledge on their own” and “are not impressed with PhDs.” Farmers should be considered as equals in partnerships. This means:

- The small holder farmer needs to be better organized (via farmer organizations):
  - To more effectively and forcefully express their voice
  - To support partnerships that seek to influence policy and demand for services
  - To use economies of scale to more easily access credit and markets
- We need to help farmers by building a marketing system. This is crucial so that a surplus seed variety has a place to go to and where farmers can buy it. “For example barley – the yield goes up, and then the price collapses because there is no market to sell into and then buy from. The Farmer Organization has to be the mechanism to work on the marketing side AND the research side.”

## Government

*The problem is not the quality of the research you produce. The problem is around policy. The fact that there is no reliable electricity, that there are no roads, no rain for cropping. It is a risky business to be a farmer in Africa. Remember the green evolution in Asia, India and Pakistan? They had a good road infrastructure and water. Those are the issues we should battle with.*

Partnerships are often created to address real or perceived deficiencies in public policy and services. Participants are frustrated by government behavior. Countries place export taxes that inhibit the ability of SHFs to grow their way out of poverty. Many do not adequately invest in agricultural, land, and infrastructure policy that allow the

potential for greater crop yields to have meaningful impact. Many do not invest sufficiently in research or extension themselves.

Often partnerships avoid or neglect to engage with government agencies and officials. Participants suggest this must change. That inclusivity should extend to government bodies.

In addition, partnerships must have the agenda and capability to influence government decision-making as part of their change model.

### Civil Society

Participants suggest that NGOs need to improve in two areas.

The first is to become more representative of farmers. This means:

- More effectively organizing SHFs
- Ensuring farmers organizations include the most vulnerable
- Enhance their own capacities to engage SHFs
- Help fill the gap between SHFs and the private sector, public sector, and researchers
- Building more effective tools to disseminate knowledge and encourage farmers to adopt vital new technologies
- Modeling good practices in asking farmers for feedback and acting on it, and practicing transparent and inclusive decision making
- Providing a channel for farmer feedback/demands to agricultural services, policy makers
- Innovating financial models to decrease donor dependency

The second is to improve their advocacy on behalf of SHFs for the public and private sectors. This means:

- Advocating for freedom of speech and representation of farmers via farmers associations
- Advocating for checks and balances in policy
- Promoting corporate social responsibility and private sector involvement
- Encouraging leaders to devolve decision-making authority at the grassroots level
- Enhancing the ability for farmers to have more power in decision-making surrounding policies

### Education Institutions

Participants suggest that it is vital for Education Institutions to meet their potential in order for R4D partnerships to succeed. The supply of available PhD and Masters' training programs is not an issue. Rather, participants suggest that these programs need

to be part of the broader civil society reform that better links newly credentialed scientists into the full agricultural development system. To do so means addressing the current perceived tension between scientists and extension services. Some participants recommend creating a Global Forum for Agriculture Extensions that would drive better coordination.

Participants would like to see education institutions:

- Better link education focused on research skills and competencies with education focused on training and extension
- Improve their curriculum by setting clear measures of quality, outcomes and impact
- Expand to influence policy. This includes offering training to politicians to provide them with a well-grounded orientation of agricultural development policy
- Build an inter-disciplinary approach to R4D
- Foster innovations in the education-research system by partnering with business – e.g. technology business incubation, transnational research
- Address limitations of the current incentives structure for researchers and faculty to provide extension and understand the full development system

### Private Sector

*“The private sector is not engaged enough. The question for them is ‘what is in it for me’? And the answer is currently not clear. We have to change means of interacting and engagement. We all have to reflect and ask ‘what is in it for us.’ If it is only networking, then what really is in it for me? You need to ask yourself – is that the most cost effective way to network?”*

Participants struggle to reach consensus on the role of the private sector. Some view larger companies as – at best – another potential donor. Others view the private sector as a customer for R4D that should engage only if it supports the financial bottom line.

Generally, participants agree that those involved in R4D partnerships need to prioritize outreach to the private sector. The more companies become fully involved and accountable to the mission of R4D partnerships, the greater the opportunities for scalable impact. This means:

- Using partnerships (in part) to ensure that companies become better linked to researchers, SHFs, and civil society
- Experimenting to show that mutual accountability among partners can lead to “win-win” outcomes
- Drawing from the competency of companies for management, “voice-of-the-customer” processes, applied R&D approaches, and effective commercialization processes
- Negotiating with companies to balance the drive for competitive advantage with the desire to keep discoveries open-source and available to all

- Focusing the private sector on building the capability of SHFs to develop yields, and potentially enter supply chains
- Inspiring companies to become a voice of advocacy on public policy reform

The Workshop next focused on an agenda for R4D partnerships going forward.

## **IV. An Action Agenda for Key Stakeholders**

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The insights from the Workshop suggest a new way to think about agricultural R4D partnerships. There is clearly a way of connecting partnership design to the agricultural R4D development process. There are of course limitations in the scope of these insights. The workshop was not exhaustive. Taken together, the matrix presented in Figure 3 provides a framework to better guide the design and execution of R4D partnerships.

Yet the design of partnerships involves politics. One needs to change the mindset of how actors think about their responsibility. For example, partnerships that coordinate development actors should bear the primary responsibility to measure the full value chain of outcomes from research discovery to commercialization. A research partnership formed or driven by the CGIAR may not need to measure the full impact of its research, but it will need to work to make sure its portion of the measurement and evaluation process is appropriately implemented and worked through with farmer input.

We think the insights emerging from the Workshop can be useful to various actors in terms of clarifying roles and responsibilities, building inclusivity, and teaching quieter voices to how to be heard and how to engage.

In this regard we suggest the following action agenda for stakeholders involved in partnerships.

- 1. Improve partnership effectiveness**
- 2. Enhance the enabling environment (policies, institutional incentives etc...)**

### **1. Improve partnership effectiveness**

We recommend several actions that will help improve partnerships effectiveness.

First, key institutions (such as GFAR, ILAC, the CGIAR, and AccountAbility) should coordinate to build awareness on the findings of the Workshop and related lessons for partnership effectiveness. Similar workshops and other communication activities should be used to engage institutions and actors involved in or seeking to build partnerships. We envision that training activities could be provided as well.

Second, further effort should occur (again, institutions such as GFAR, ILAC, CGIAR, and AccountAbility could help lead this) to build a common monitoring and evaluation approach that emphasizes continuous improvement.

Third, together, funders and partnerships should invest to build specific mechanisms to better include the voices of SHFs and other beneficiaries. This is easier said than done and requires deeper research and investigation on effective approaches.

## **2. ENHANCE THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT**

We recommend several actions that will help improve partnerships effectiveness.

First, funders should embrace and adopt common expectations and standards for partnership practices around inclusivity, organization, and accountability. Funding should be tied to a partnership's ability to meet these standards. Standards might include (but are not limited to):

- Establishing a clear model of development impact from discovery through to reinvestment
- Making an explicit link between agricultural research and commercialization that would produce something demanded by farmers
- Demonstrating clear, common metrics and targets, with an emphasis on learning and improvement
- Clearly demonstrating high-quality, effective interactions with SHFs including obtaining data, demonstrating understanding of the data acquired and embracing inclusiveness and responsiveness.

Second, international agencies that both drive partnership formation (e.g., CGIAR, the World Bank, the United Nations, large international NGOs, and major foundations) should adopt similar standards as funders. Their participation should be tied to commitments for all participants to adhere to and implement these standards.

Third, greater effort should be made on the part of funders, international agencies, and participating organizations to engage host country governments in partnership design. Partnerships must identify means to encourage governments to hold a stake in the success of partnerships.