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**RESEARCH INTO USE: AN INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF THE RIU  
NIGERIA COUNTRY PROGRAMME**

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**DISCUSSION PAPER SERIES**

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The views expressed, and any errors, in this report are my own.

# RESEARCH INTO USE: AN INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF THE RIU NIGERIA COUNTRY PROGRAMME

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## Abstract

Commissioned by the Central Research Team (CRT) of RIU, this study develops an institutional history of the Research Into Use Nigeria Country Programme. It has sought to focus on the specific mechanisms associated with ‘innovation platforms’ and the function of the country programme as a brokering or intermediary within wider innovation and development landscapes. RIU-Nigeria appears to provide an example of how innovation brokerage can take place outside of pre-established structures (innovation platforms) and workplans that intentionally seek to promote the practice. In this respect, its experiences would question whether ‘function can follow form’, as the early RIU programme planning documents seemed to assume. Rather, the case of RIU-Nigeria illustrates how brokerage occurs under circumstances that are difficult to predict and in institutional spaces that may lie beyond the formal remits of organisations. As a consequence, an innovation broker can rarely be appointed, and may be an individual or organisation with ‘multiple hats’ with demonstrated agility or suppleness to respond to unexpected opportunities.

**Key words:** Research Into Use, Agricultural Research, Innovation, Policy, Institutional Learning, Nigeria

**JEL Codes:** N5, N57, O13, O19, O22, O31, O32, O33, O38, O55, Q13, Q16

## RIU DISCUSSION PAPER SERIES

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>LIST OF ACRONYMS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>11</b>
Box 1: INNOVATION BROKERING	13
<b>2. CONTEXT AND EARLY HISTORY</b>	<b>15</b>
Box 2: THE NIGERIAN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR	18
<b>3. RIU-NIGERIA'S CURRENT ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>4. LESSONS</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>ANNEX 1. TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>ANNEX 2. EVOLUTION OF RIU-NIGERIA</b>	<b>56</b>

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>ACP</b>	-	Africa Country Programme
<b>ADA</b>	-	Abanbeke Development Association
<b>ADP</b>	-	Agricultural Development Programme
<b>ARCN</b>	-	Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria
<b>CAADP</b>	-	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
<b>CGIAR</b>	-	Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research
<b>CIAT</b>	-	International Centre for Tropical Agriculture
<b>CRT</b>	-	Central Research Team
<b>CSPD</b>	-	Country Strategy and Programme Design
<b>DDS</b>	-	Diocesan Development Services
<b>DFID</b>	-	Department for International Development
<b>FAO</b>	-	The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>IARC</b>	-	International Agricultural Research Centre
<b>ICRC</b>	-	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>ICT</b>	-	Information and Communications Technology
<b>IFAD</b>	-	International Fund for Agriculture and Development
<b>IITA</b>	-	International Institute for Tropical Agriculture
<b>LEEDS</b>	-	Local Government Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
<b>KIT</b>	-	Royal Tropical Institute (Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen)
<b>LINK</b>	-	Learning INnovation Knowledge
<b>MDGs</b>	-	Millennium Development Goals

<b>MIL</b>	-	Monitoring, Impact and Learning
<b>MTR</b>	-	Medium Term Review
<b>NAERLS</b>	-	National Agricultural Extension and Liaison Service
<b>NARI</b>	-	National Agricultural Research Institute
<b>NARS</b>	-	National Agricultural Research System
<b>NEEDS</b>	-	National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
<b>NGO</b>	-	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NIC</b>	-	National Innovation Coalition
<b>NIFFR</b>	-	National Institute of Freshwater Fisheries Research
<b>NIOMR</b>	-	Nigerian Institute of Oceanography and Marine Research
<b>NRCRI</b>	-	Nigerian Root Crop Research Institute
<b>PDT</b>	-	Platform Development Team
<b>PICS</b>	-	Purdue Improved Cowpea Storage Project
<b>R&amp;D</b>	-	Research and Development
<b>RIU</b>	-	Research Into Use
<b>RNRRS</b>	-	Renewable Natural Resources Research Strategy
<b>S&amp;T</b>	-	Science and Technology
<b>SEEDS</b>	-	State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
<b>SOS</b>	-	Stamp Out Sleeping Sickness
<b>T&amp;V</b>	-	Training and Visit
<b>TR</b>	-	Technical Review
<b>UK</b>	-	United Kingdom
<b>UN</b>	-	United Nations

- USA** - United States of America
- WAAPP** - West African Agricultural Productivity Project

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Into Use (RIU) was conceived as a successor to the Department of International Development's (DFID) 10-year Renewable Natural Resources Research Strategy (RNRRS). While the research outputs of RNRRS were of high quality, they remained largely unutilised. RIU has set out to derive greater impact from the products of its predecessor.

Since its establishment, RIU's operational focus has been sharpened and it has become a research programme in its own right, dedicated to developing a better understanding of the role of innovation in socio-economic change. Among its portfolio of activities are a series of Africa Country Programmes (ACPs) that are experimenting with ways to build capacity to put research into use. The ACPs have pursued a range of strategies in realising their mandates. These include, but are not limited to, innovation platforms. Some of the country programmes are led by private companies; others are an integral part of policy bodies or ministry departments. These differences in institutional arrangements have led to a number of different ways in which the country programmes are linked into the wider policy and economic environment.

Commissioned by the Central Research Team (CRT) of the RIU, this report develops an institutional history of the Nigeria country programme, with a view of gaining an embedded understanding of the specific mechanism associated with innovation platforms, and the function of the country programme as a brokering or intermediary organisation within wider innovation and development landscapes. The current strategies and tactics of the country programme are explained with reference to its early context and history.

By all accounts, RIU-Nigeria appears to have been bold in venturing beyond its initial architecture in catalysing transformative relationships (at the individual or organisational levels), working routines (both within and between organisations), policies, funding mechanisms (by the private sector, government or donors), as well as production and use of knowledge. Indeed, in terms of the platforms, the country programme opted for a distinctly 'hands-off' approach. This was partly driven by necessity, given the vastness of the country and the size of the team. It did have the upshot of instilling a sense of autonomy and self-

directedness into the platforms from the outset, and allowing the programme team to pursue unforeseen opportunities in support of core platform activities. These have included post-conflict rehabilitation and serving as a trade envoy to regional, high potential markets. Overall, the programme provides an example of how innovation trajectories evolve in unpredictable ways in response to the opportunities and constraints in its specific operating context, and the importance of nimble and proactive teams in pursuing optimum gains for programme stakeholders.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Commissioned by the Central Research Team (CRT) of the Research Into Use (RIU) programme — funded by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) — this study chronicles the institutional history of the RIU country programme in Nigeria. In documenting the evolution of the programme, the study was asked to focus on two aspects<sup>2</sup>: the specific mechanisms associated with ‘innovation platforms’ and the function of the country programme as a broker or intermediary within wider innovation and development landscapes.

The report draws on documentary analysis and a combination of informal, unstructured discussions and more formal, semi-structured interviews that were held in Abuja and Kano between November 22 and 25, 2010. Respondents included two members of the country programme team, along with three individuals who provided input into the design of the programme and who have remained as ‘ad hoc advisers’. Two of the advisers also act as resource persons for two of the platforms. Representatives of the programme’s host organisation, along with a partner project, were also consulted for perspectives on RIU-Nigeria.

The representativeness of the cohort of respondents was skewed in favour of government agencies as well as national and international research organisations. Due to unforeseen circumstances, interviews with country team members and members of the three platforms were cancelled, as were discussions with representatives of other partner projects or organisations. A timeline of programme evolution was developed together with members of the country programme team (Annex 2). Prior to the round of in-country interviews, two key informant interviews were held in early November with individuals familiar with the country programme design process and the current status of activities. All interviews were

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<sup>2</sup> The Terms of Reference are included in Annex 1

coded to ensure respondent anonymity and the final report was validated by the country programme coordinator.

The specific points of discussion varied with each respondent. Collectively, however, they contributed towards getting a measure of:

- i. What factors shaped the evolution of the country programme, and what were their consequences
- ii. What RIU does at present, how it carries out these activities and what allows it to do so
- iii. How the platforms function and what they do
- iv. What in the operational and organisational design makes the outcomes and impacts of the country programme more or less pro-poor and amenable to impact at scale

This report, therefore, reflects the views of a select group of individuals. Given the unexpected changes to the interview schedule, the exercise yielded indicative insights, which remain to be developed further.

In analysing the role of the country programme as a broker, the study sought to cast the experiences of RIU-Nigeria against a growing literature on innovation mediation or brokerage. Some key insights, as suggested by this literature, are summarised in Box 1 on the next page.

RIU-Nigeria appears to provide an example of how innovation brokerage can take place outside of pre-established structures (innovation platforms) and workplans that intentionally seek to promote the practice. In this respect, its experiences would question whether 'function can follow form', as the early RIU programme planning documents seemed to assume. Rather, the case of RIU-Nigeria illustrates how brokerage occurs under circumstances that are difficult to predict and in institutional spaces that may lie beyond the formal remits of organisations. As a consequence, an innovation broker can rarely be appointed, and may be an individual or organisation with 'multiple hats' with demonstrated agility or suppleness to respond to unexpected opportunities.

### **Box 1: Innovation Brokering**

#### **What is brokering?**

- Providing information about potential collaborators
- Negotiating a transaction between parties
- Mediating, serving as a go-between
- Seeking advice, funding and support for innovation activities
- Making explicit innovation needs and demands regarding technology, knowledge, funding and policy
- Facilitating linkages between relevant actors
- Making norms, values and incentives compatible
- Encouraging the building of trust, the establishment of working procedures, reflective learning and conflict management

#### **What are some of the common characteristics of a broker?**

- Often publicly funded to provide a brokering role
- Neutrality
- Strongly embedded in operating context
- Has surfaced organically; can rarely be imposed in a top-down manner
- Activities are often intangible, and beyond the scope of conventional indicators
- Brokerage may not be the primary role of an organisation

#### **Who might act as a broker?**

- NGOs
- National/ international NGOs
- Descendants of special projects
- Donors
- Experiments within NAR programmes
- Farmers and industry organisations
- Research organisations
- Specialist third party organisations
- Government organisations
- ICT-based brokers
- Innovation consultants
- Peer networks
- Systemic instruments (at higher levels; beyond government or private sector interests)
- Internet
- Research councils with innovation agency
- Education brokers

RIU-Nigeria seems, by all accounts, to have been bold in venturing beyond its initial architecture in catalysing transformative relationships (at the individual or organisational levels), working routines (both within and between organisations), policies, funding mechanisms (by the private sector, government or donors), as well as production and use of knowledge. Following two decisive reviews of RIU as a whole in March and August 2009, the Nigeria country programme was accorded greater leeway to pursue innovation enabling activities in support of core platform agendas. The RIU-Nigeria team — led by ‘an out-of-the-box thinker’ — used this opportunity to expand the programme portfolio to areas such as post-conflict rehabilitation. More recently, it has added a further ‘brokering hat’ to its collection, leading a trade delegation from Nigeria on a visit to the RIU sister programme in Sierra Leone.

In terms of the platforms, the country programme opted for a distinctly ‘hands-off’ approach. This was partly driven by necessity — given the vastness of the country and the size of the team. It did have the upshot of instilling a sense of autonomy and self-direction into the platforms from the outset. In its own words, RIU-Nigeria functions through both direct action and through mediating collective action by others. The activities that are undertaken through the platforms are varied and include the dissemination of improved crop varieties alongside the negotiation of business contracts between, for instance, livestock keepers, fodder producers and a baler company. In this way, the platforms have combined what might be seen as rather classical transfer-of-technology efforts (particularly in the early stages of the platforms) and more pioneering innovation brokering.

The report is divided into four sections. The subsequent section sets the context in which the country programme emerged and charts its early history. Section 3 takes a closer look at the current innovation enabling activities that RIU-Nigeria is involved in, including three commodity-based innovation platforms and the lateral initiatives that have stemmed from them, while Section 4 summarises the emerging lessons.

## 2. CONTEXT AND EARLY HISTORY

### 2.1 The dominance of oil in the Nigerian economy

A common discourse that permeates many contemporary analyses of the Nigerian (political) economy is that of ‘the resource curse’. This discourse maintains that natural resource endowments can damage a country’s growth rates, levels of human development and social equality (see, for instance, Kolstad and Søreide, 2009). Even Nigeria’s then vice president (who is currently President) had suggested that such has been the impact of the country’s oil wealth.<sup>3</sup>

Governments, both past and present, have sought to ‘diversify the productive base’ and ‘stimulate non-oil-based growth’. The most recent effort traces its roots to the Obasanjo administration, which, at the turn of the millennium, devised economic empowerment and development strategies for the federal (the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy; NEEDS), the state (State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy; SEEDS), and the local (Local Government Economic and Development Strategy; LEEDS) levels (Kerr, et al., 2007). The Yar’Adua administration, which took over in 2007, sought to build upon these reforms through its 7-point plan (African Development Bank, 2010). On assuming office, the present Jonathan administration adjusted these economic and policy thrusts towards the Vision 2020 agenda (*ibid*).<sup>4</sup> Collectively, all recent administrations have pursued a series of public finance reforms and have sought to elevate the status of agriculture on par with those of telecommunications, banking, power, ports, steel, mining and other sectors.

By most accounts the reforms have led to some gains. According to the United Nations (2008), the first phase of NEEDS (2004-2007) “improved macroeconomic foundations of pro-poor growth” (p.2). Nigeria’s growth rate increased, budget balances were brought under

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.upi.com/Science\\_News/Resource-Wars/2008/02/14/Analysis-Nigerias-resource-curse/UPI82671203041007/](http://www.upi.com/Science_News/Resource-Wars/2008/02/14/Analysis-Nigerias-resource-curse/UPI82671203041007/)

<sup>4</sup> African Development Bank (2010) *Federal Republic of Nigeria: Extension to 2011 of the 2005-2009 Country Strategy Paper*. Available online: [http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Nigeria\\_\\_CSP\\_eng2011.pdf](http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Nigeria__CSP_eng2011.pdf)

control, inflation declined to single digits, exchange rates were stabilised and the country's reserves rose to US\$60 billion (the largest in sub-Saharan Africa).

Nonetheless, oil continues to account for 95% of export earnings and 85% of government revenues.<sup>5</sup> The persistence of this scenario has had various consequences: "Firstly, productive activity in other sectors has been crowded out, thus, stunting the development of a diversified, private sector-driven economy, a tax-paying citizenry and strong and independent civic institutions. Second, a narrow revenue base has lent itself to 'elite capture' and rent-seeking. Third, the State has not yet realised its full potential for promoting social and economic transformation due to a lack of transparency and accountability in governance, resulting in poor returns from public expenditure" (United Nations, 2008; p.2).

## 2.2 The place of agriculture

According to the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, agriculture contributed just over 40% to the GDP in 2009. This is in contrast with the oil and gas sector, which accounted for only 16%.<sup>6</sup> Agriculture employs approximately two-thirds of the total labour force and is a source of livelihood for 90% of the rural population.<sup>7</sup> An estimated 90% of agricultural output is produced by smallholders, with farm sizes ranging from 0.5 ha (in the southern part of the country) to 4 ha (in the north).<sup>8</sup>

The International Fund for Agriculture and Development (IFAD) has suggested that agriculture was also showing signs of positive change following the reforms at the turn of the millennium and afforded still further possibilities for development: "[B]etween 2003 and 2007 the agricultural sector is reported to have grown by 7 per cent a year. The area of land under cultivation could be increased by as much as 100 per cent. And there is substantial scope for an increase in irrigation, which now covers only 7 per cent of irrigable land".<sup>9</sup> Yet, Nigeria remains a food-deficit country that imports substantial amounts of grain, livestock

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<sup>5</sup> <http://go.worldbank.org/BBC2UR6GM0H>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/web/guest/country/home/tags/nigeria>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.fao.org/countries/55528/en/nga/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/web/guest/country/home/tags/nigeria>

products and fish — this, despite that fact that it is a major global producer of cassava, yam and cowpea and supports a vast fishing sub-sector.<sup>10</sup> Close to 10% of the population is undernourished and malnutrition among children is high.<sup>11</sup>

This characterisation closely reflects the circumstances that existed in early 2007 at the inception of the RIU-Nigeria programme design process. The task at hand for the Country Strategy and Programme Design (CSPD) team was to navigate a national policy agenda that nominally recognised the importance of agriculture, but that struggled to provide it with substantial backing; a sectoral governance context characterised by ‘over-involvement’ by the state and a mosaic of policies and organisations — both at the federal and state-levels — that were in the process of undergoing reforms; and a vast range of agro-ecological zones and production systems that provided a livelihood for the majority of the rural population.

### **2.3 The Country Strategy and Programme Design (CSPD) process**

The country strategy and programme development process was necessarily extensive. A country assessment was conducted in January-February 2007, which fed into a concept note (submitted in October 2007) that set out the rationale for RIU’s presence in Nigeria. Following an institutional assessment, which canvassed existing multi-stakeholder processes for possible alignment with the future country programme (November-December, 2007), a draft strategy was developed on the basis of consultations with in-country stakeholders (January-February, 2008). This strategy was finalised in March 2008 (see Annex II for a timeline of programme evolution).

The country assessment team was confronted by a tumultuous agricultural sector (Kerr, et al., 2007). Responsibility over agricultural research and extension lay with the federal and state governments, respectively. The former consisted of 17 National Agricultural Research Institutes (NARIs), which were overseen by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, alongside 59 higher education agencies and 3 international agricultural research institutes (IARCs). At the federal level, the National Agricultural Extension and Liaison Service (NAERLS) and the

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/web/guest/country/home/tags/nigeria>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.fao.org/countries/55528/en/nga/>

former Project Coordination Unit and current Food Reserve Agency, oversaw agricultural extension. However, the actual provision of extension services rested with state-level Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs), set up in the early 1970s under a World Bank scheme. These were seeped in a ‘training & visit’ (T&V) culture, which was predicated upon a flow of information from researcher to extension agents and ultimately to farmers. Local government authorities also hosted agricultural units, which facilitated the provision of agricultural extension, input supply, credit schemes and the mobilisation of farmers’ groups (Atampugre et al., 2008).

The need to reorganise this and other facets of the agricultural sector had been identified several years prior. The country strategy (2008) provided a bleak assessment of the arrangement that was in place (Box 2).

#### **Box 2**

According to the country strategy (Country Strategy Development Team, 2008), the Nigerian agricultural research and extension system suffered from *“insufficient, unreliable and misallocated funding; absence of competitive modes of funding which limits the potential to boost the cost effectiveness and relevance of research; absence of a national research policy resulting in a lack of coordination and duplication between research institutes; supply-driven non participatory and top-down research disconnected from farmers’ needs and with limited or no accountability to them. The linkages between research and extension are weak; research outputs in Nigeria are largely not generated in response to specific demand or vision. Research is often conducted primarily in fulfilment of each institution’s mandate and to advance researchers’ careers; laws establishing the research institutions do not emphasise the need for the institutions to market their research products; public extension suffers from a lack of coordination between service providers at different levels of government. Non-participatory methods of extension (T&V is widely used) are the norm; women’s access to improved technologies is limited by the staffing patterns of public extension agencies. The problem is particularly severe in the north where there are hardly any female extension workers, and cultural practices limit men’s interaction with female farmers”* (p. 6).

Although the Nigerian NARS — the largest and arguably the most complex in sub-Saharan Africa — had enjoyed a reputation for solid work in the past, the systemic challenges outlined in Box 2 were felt to have eroded its standing. Moreover, Nigeria came under sanction from several countries — including the United Kingdom — following the political turmoil of the early 1990s. As a consequence, DFID-supported projects also came to a halt. As one respondent (RIUN2211ABA) recalled, though this prevented RNRRS research from taking place in Nigeria, the NARS nonetheless sought to maintain skill levels and up-to-date research portfolios by interacting with international research organisations and by carrying out government-funded projects. This ensured that some level of ‘absorptive capacity’ existed within the NARS to embed eventual RNRRS outputs and RIU starting points within the Nigerian context.

Challenges were faced not only by the NARS and the extension services; the private sector in agriculture was also confronted by a demanding operating environment. This had focused its efforts on generating agricultural produce, as opposed to adding value to production processes (Atampugre et al., 2008). Nigerian producers were protected from competition by a policy environment that also curtailed the export potential of Nigerian agricultural commodities. Producers were said to have few incentives to experiment with improving efficiency and quality. The ‘unstable’ and ‘unpredictable’ political climate, alongside poor transport and power infrastructure, deterred investors. Public expenditure was described as ‘wasteful’; oil-based revenue to the state had led to a “large workforce in public institutions but with limited capacity to deliver goods and services” (p.7). Indeed, the state was felt to be ‘over-involved’ in agriculture. One of the consequences of this, as one respondent explained, was that “bureaucrats see how much power they have by being involved in the [agricultural] system. The private sector is always at the periphery. The contrast with the Federal Institute for Industrial Research is illustrative. They have no problem getting their research used; the business guys identify the research questions. In agriculture, the reverse seems to be the case. The farmers are kept at bay; they are not involved in the research that is going on,” (RIUN2211ABA).

Within this context, and given the programme’s limited resources, an eventual RIU Nigeria country programme was advised to manage a ‘focused’ set of activities — to start small and

to expand on the basis of input from in-country stakeholders, and, as much as possible, to align itself with existing projects and programmes (Kerr, et al., 2007; Atampugre et al., 2008). Such linkages were central to the notion of innovation systems — a web of individuals and organisations that are generating, modifying and employing knowledge in unprecedented ways (*ibid.*) — which informed the overall RIU programmatic outlook.

Among the central principles at the core of the programme was an action research approach that emphasised continuous learning from experience and a flexible programme architecture that could adjust to changing circumstances. The programme design documents identified a three-level presence for RIU-Nigeria. At the federal level, the programme could participate in NARS restructuring and contribute to an emerging Agriculture Policy Support Fund. At the state-level, RIU-Nigeria had the opportunity of aligning itself with the SEEDS framework and contributing towards revamping the extension service. At the local level, in turn, the programme design team identified an opportunity for ‘innovation platforms’ in aquaculture, water-harvesting and cassava. Maize, soybean and cowpea, along with the small ruminant sub-sector, were also identified as potential ‘high impact’ areas of activity. In the end, the country programme would come to support innovation platforms in cassava, cowpea/soybean/livestock and aquaculture.

The innovation platforms were to consist of a constellation of actors with a mutual interest, who would use research-derived knowledge in novel ways to deliver goods and services in support of poverty alleviation (Kerr, et al., 2007). RIU-Nigeria was envisioned to support inter-platform exchanges among eventual platform leaders. The Country Strategy (Atampugre et al., 2008) also proposed a ‘coalition of champions’ and a ‘policy advocacy coalition’ to advocate on behalf of the platforms — and, indeed, RIU-Nigeria as a whole — at the state- and federal-levels, respectively. According to the country design documents and to respondents, these were not envisioned to be permanent structures. The roles that the two coalitions were expected to play resemble those assigned to National Innovation Coalitions (NIC) in other Africa Country Programmes. In practice, RIU-Nigeria would come to mobilise its relationship with its eventual host (see below), as well as an ‘ad hoc advisory group’ (also below), to seek leverage in policy processes. The notion of a formalised NIC did not appear to take root in Nigeria.

The 2007 institutional assessment had canvassed for existing platforms with which RIU-Nigeria could become affiliated. Although it came across various types of associations, it found none that fully reflected innovation platforms in an RIU sense (Atampugre et al., 2008). A Platform Development Team (PDT) was to support the formation of the platforms and serve as a neutral arbitrator, with no vested interests or direct involvement in the implementation and management of the platform. This, it was felt, would be more likely to lead to 'effective platforms that respond to the priorities of all stakeholders' (*ibid.* ; p. 20). As in other RIU Africa Country Programmes, for the platforms to secure full support from RIU-Nigeria, they were expected to prepare fully budgeted proposals.

An individual who was closely involved in the programme design recalls that the intention was to set up a project that "would be linked to several others. It would be acting as a catalyst and a facilitator of several processes operating at several levels. The programmes were dealing with some of the same commodity issues; what were the synergies? They were not necessarily handling it with intent to influence policy or to experiment and learn. RIU-Nigeria would engage with several others and keep a learning brief of how things were evolving" (interview RIUN1411AC).

The respondent went on to explain the identity that was envisioned for the programme: "the idea of it was interesting, but it was something that had never been operated before. It was experimental. It was willing to recognise that technology may be the least of the concerns of the stakeholders; something else might have to be addressed to remove a critical bottleneck in livelihoods improvement. That is not to say that technology would not play a role; it might, but at a later stage" (*ibid.*).

Still, it was far from inevitable that the eventual programme would indeed assume this character. The same respondent described the process of country programme development as overburdened by a complex preparatory procedure laid down by the consortium managing RIU. This called for a string of diagnostic reports ahead of any (even trial-based) implementation; and a handing down of a prescriptive innovation systems framework. Some members of the country strategy team favoured a 'getting your hands dirty' tack and

figuring out what worked and what did not. Instead, “there was a lot of theorising and adherence to the programme development plan set out by RIU management” (*ibid.*).

Another point of discussion was the timing of the recruitment of the country programme team. Some members preferred developing a programme design in full prior to filling the positions of a country coordinator to oversee the programme, a monitoring, learning and impact (MIL) coordinator, and a platform facilitator to provide backup to the platforms. Others felt it necessary to involve the eventual implementing team in programme design, thereby ensuring greater ownership of activities by in-country staff. In the end, the former camp prevailed. The country programme coordinator would put in place mechanisms for ensuring that the new team could tap into some institutional memory on the programme design process. He recruited an ‘ad hoc advisory group’ of well-positioned individuals, who were involved in preparing the original strategy. Some of these individuals currently serve as resource persons for the three innovation platforms and also carry out occasional consultancy work for the country programme.

In 2001, the World Bank had called for the creation of a small, yet high calibre, apex organisation that could spearhead research and coordinate funding (World Bank, 2001; as cited in Kerr et al., 2007). Plans for the establishment of this Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARC�) were very much on the cards when RIU began to look into establishing a presence in Nigeria. ARC� was to coordinate the NARIs; extension services, however, would continue to operate under a separate administrative structure.

This newly emergent entity was identified as a potential host for the RIU-Nigeria programme, albeit not without reservations. ARC� was considered to offer access to federal-level policy deliberations, thus potentially helping to leverage the uptake of the programme’s ideas.

Anchoring itself to an organisation that had yet to establish its standing was risky. The potential returns were, by all accounts, worth it. One respondent recalls that the leadership of the new ARC� “was ready to try something different and receptive towards the RIU way of working” (interview RIUN2211ABA). This willingness to go against pervasive institutional

practice within the agricultural sector was accredited to the fact that the council would be staffed by individuals with experience in research, as opposed to civil servants. The former were “less tarnished by politics” (*ibid.*). Another respondent also remembers ARCN being “very excited about the approach. They recognised that it would turn their approach towards funding research upside down” (RIUN1411AC). The consequences for RIU-Nigeria of ARCN becoming a host included access to high-level decision-makers and an ability to shape the working culture of a new — and by all indications, potentially influential — agency in the agricultural sector. As subsequent sections will discuss, the arrangement between ARCN and RIU-Nigeria appears to have thrived; so much so, that the country programme has been approached by other organisations in the development sector for its lessons on forging good working relationships with government agencies.

That is not to say that the new agency would displace existing ones as the sole interlocutor for RIU-Nigeria. Indeed, the programme was explicit in its intention to work with those entities, policies, priorities and processes that were already in place, given their embeddedness in the agricultural milieu of the country (Ugbe, 2010).

Despite its bleak assessment of the involvement of the private sector in agriculture, the early country programme design documents did recognise the “enormous opportunities for a mutually rewarding public-private partnership including developing enterprises using RNRRS and other research outputs” (Atampugre et al., 2008; p. 4). The country programme team would “put in a lot of effort to mediate the entry of the private sector into agriculture [given] the public over-investment, and the rapid turnover of political appointees tasked with overseeing agriculture” (interview RIUN2211ABA). As Section 4 will detail, the country programme appears to have been successful in forging initiatives involving the private sector, not just in Nigeria, but also elsewhere in the region.

## **2.4 Consolidation, autonomy and funding innovation**

With the strategy in place, the country design process moved onto recruiting the team and devising an implementation plan. The staffing of the country team was completed by October 2008, while the implementation plan was finalised in January 2009. The platforms were inaugurated between February and May of that year (see Annex 2 for a timeline of the programme's evolution). By this time, the overall RIU programme was undergoing its mid-term review. The conclusions of this assessment would have far-reaching consequences for the activities of the Africa Country Programmes. They would have greater autonomy and flexibility in designing activities according to the opportunities and constraints in their operating context (RIU, 2010); this allowed the Nigeria programme to interpret its mandate more freely and to act upon prospects that may have otherwise been considered outside its remit. The 'reporting burden' was also eased, allowing the programmes to focus on activities on the ground. One respondent recalls that prior to this, Africa Country Programmes were expected to report to 'a dozen' individuals, all of whom assumed that reporting happened to them alone (interview RIUN2211ABA). Under the reorganised RIU, country teams would communicate with a single individual on administrative and management matters and another on analytical issues (*ibid.*).

Indeed, the new RIU was more distinguishable as a learning programme. RIU-Nigeria was asked to set goals in the form of projected numbers of beneficiaries, who would be reached by its activities. Any variance in the expected and actual numbers — monitored throughout implementation — would kick-start the analytical wheel of the programme. This would generate a further set of outputs: process lessons on the dynamics of innovation for development (*ibid.*).

To further facilitate the operational implementation of the programme, the Africa Country Programmes were given access to a Flexibility Fund, which they could disperse at their discretion to encourage 'innovation enabling activities'. In Nigeria, these have been used to support the production of balers for fodder and a public-private partnership to develop locally-produced, high quality and affordable fish meal, for instance.

Coinciding so closely with the actual onset of activities, the reorganisation that was expected of RIU-Nigeria was not as extensive as that of other country programmes (such as

Malawi), which were advised to phase out entire platforms. As was the case with the other Africa Country Programmes, RIU-Nigeria closed down ‘poorly-defined’ (RIU Annual Report, 2009-2010) information market activities. These had initially been conceived as a means of redressing a supply-demand gap in agricultural knowledge between national and international agricultural research institutes and farmers and their representative bodies (interview RIUN1411AC). With hindsight, there appears to have been something of a dissonance between this component and the ethos of the RIU programme, which claimed to be breaking away from a usual linear mode of agricultural development.

On the whole, RIU-Nigeria was deemed to have been among the ‘best performing’ country programmes and there was a palpable sense of expectation that the activities, which it had put in place, would soon begin to generate results (interview RIUN111BR). The further consolidation of scope was thought to have played an important role in allowing RIU-Nigeria to build up legitimacy among its stakeholders. One respondent noted that RIU-Nigeria ‘was believable’, because it did not stretch itself too thinly (interview RIUN2211ABB). Moreover, it was building a reputation for itself as an entity that was able to avoid becoming entangled in the ‘moral economy of public administration’ in Nigeria, an term used to refer to corruption and the politicisation of the bureaucracy. These circumstances had driven many externally-funded programmes and projects to exist at arm’s length of government agencies. Yet, here was an undertaking that had sought to embed itself in one. While the potential added value of being placed in such an agency might be attributed to the foresight of the country strategy team, it was the eventual country programme team that made the relationship effectual.

Perhaps the most significant consequence of the reviews was the freedom given to the programme to forge an identity beyond a strict reading of its initial remit. Indeed, as the subsequent section explains, RIU-Nigeria forged ahead under ‘the new RIU’ by pursuing various lateral activities from its platforms.

### 3. RIU-NIGERIA'S CURRENT ACTIVITIES

#### 3.1 Platforms

The country strategy team recommended several sectors in which RIU-facilitated innovation platforms could make an impact. Ultimately, the country programme settled on three: cowpea/soybean/ livestock, aquaculture and cassava. In each of these, RIU-Nigeria has sought to address three cross-cutting issues: food productivity, post-harvest value addition and access to markets, as well as policy. The latter is taken to include research mandates, extension practice, agricultural import and export practices, and agro-allied industries (interview RIUN2211ABA).

Each platform is 'a club of self-interested parties' who believe that by collaborating with other stakeholders they are able to address issues that are of concern to them. The role of RIU-Nigeria is to transform the interfaces between them into operational collaborations. Although the specific configurations of the platforms vary, all bring together farmers or farmers' interest groups; representatives of the research and extension systems; various other government agencies (often performing a sectoral regulatory or other oversight function); small-scale manufacturers of agricultural machinery or other inputs; agri-processors; wholesalers and retailers; other private sector actors; as well as banks and credit facilities. RIU-Nigeria is said to have made a particular effort in enrolling the latter two categories of actors into its activities; the policy and institutional contexts of small-scale agricultural practitioners, the commercial-scale private sector and banking have thus far struggled to find common working ground (*ibid.*).

How does RIU manage to facilitate effective working arrangements between such diverse stakeholder groups? According to one respondent, "it is a continuous effort to articulate and rearticulate a collective or common interest. It changes with every issue that the platform is faced with. Every issue brings in a multitude of practices that need to be addressed. For example, an oil company tells farmers that they need to plant a different variety for companies to be interested in purchasing it. Farmers make the change, but [the]

company is still not buying the oil. The bottleneck turns out to be the fact that the soybeans have to be collected in one place [for it to make sense] for the company to purchase or transport it in bulk. The issue now becomes coordinating the FBOs (farmer-based organisations), making them understand what they need to do to enter the market” (RIUN2211ABA).

The number of active, regularly-attending members varies between the platforms. Indeed, membership is described as flexible. As one respondent explains, “this makes sense for a responsive, issue-driven, multi-stakeholder process. It is possible to find yourself working with new sets of people, who don’t at the outset have a common vision. But, you can’t force people to remain as part of the platform” (interview RIUN2211ABC).

In bringing the platforms together, RIU-Nigeria carried out stakeholder analyses along the sectoral value chains. This included one-on-one meetings with potential platform members. The intention was to assess them not just in terms of their formal mandates, but their actual activities and capacities. These meetings also served as an initial round of outreach to raise awareness of the new programme and interest in being part of it. At their inaugural meetings, the platforms were guided through a participatory value chain analysis to ensure that all relevant actors had been approached and to identify the issues that each platform would address (interview RIUN2211ABC).

Each platform holds meetings (initially envisioned to take place on a quarterly basis, but in practice, they convene as-and-when-needed) to implement agendas that were formulated collectively. Platforms also commission or appoint working groups to carry out studies or assessments of key policy areas (at times, RIU-N may task a consultant to carry out a study on an issue identified by the platform); organise meetings with actors who are able to advance platform interests; arrange field trips; and convene members to participate in RIU-Nigeria-facilitated training. Members also interact outside of formal platform events to, for instance, share experiences of growing particular crop varieties, link buyers of produce to suppliers who have an excess to offload, and to set market prices (see subsequent sections on the cowpea/soybean/livestock and aquaculture platforms) (*ibid.*).

The role of RIU-Nigeria has been to serve as a catalyst. It has brought the platforms together, but allowed each to follow a unique evolutionary trajectory. As the platforms have matured, the contribution of the country programme has also changed. Members of the RIU-Nigeria team do not attend all platform meetings. As such, the platforms have engaged in self-directed learning ('consciously or not') and are starting to operate quite autonomously (interview RIUN2211ABA).

The platforms are said to have had different starting points. The southern-based cassava platform may have benefited from higher literacy rates among its members, in contrast to its cowpea/soybean/livestock counterpart in the north. The cassava sector also has a long history of public sector support. The development of aquaculture, in turn, has been more clearly driven by the private sector. Yet there is a strong entrepreneurial element in the production and post-harvest stages of both cassava and fish (interview RIUN2211ABC).

The frequency of meetings and 'level of organisation' also varies between the platforms. The cassava platform holds monthly meetings and minutes these carefully. According to one respondent (RIUN2211ABC), the aquaculture platform has met only once as a larger group (at the time of writing this paper), but its members convene more frequently at subsidiary, zonal-levels in Idah, Zaria and Kaduna. The cowpea/soybean/livestock platform also occasionally comes together in its entirety; however, this has also subdivided itself into two groups — one based in Kano and the other in Kaduna — that interact more frequently. Their remits are also said to be somewhat different, reflecting the importance of cowpea in the surroundings of Kano and that of soybean in the Kaduna area. Respondents report varying levels of communication across sub-platforms and platforms: the membership of the cowpea/soybean/livestock platform, for instance, overlaps partly with that of aquaculture due to the potential use of the legumes as fish feed.

All platforms have elected chairpersons and other 'management functionaries'. These include vice-chairpersons, secretaries and treasurers. The cassava platform has also opted to appoint a public relations officer. The platforms do not have dedicated facilitators, but the country programme can tap into a pool of such individuals and hire them on a transient basis to assist in arranging platform meetings or other events. Although the chairpersons

and their deputies are expected to play leadership roles in the platforms, such functions can be assumed by other individuals or organisations as well. For instance, all platforms have resource persons who provide back-up support and access to networks that can advance the interests of the platforms. The resource persons belong to the research sector and some of them also serve on the RIU-Nigeria 'ad hoc advisory board'. Most of them have also carried out consultancy work for RIU-Nigeria (interview RIUN2211ABC).

The professional backgrounds and organisational affiliations of the resource persons are described as beneficial and as an important break with the past. The convention has been for civil servants to provide advice to or direct agricultural projects. This is said to have led to excessive bureaucracy, rent-seeking and the mechanistic implementation of work-plans. The fact that the resource persons come from a sector that is accustomed to working in a linear, transfer-of-technology mode was not seen as a hindrance; they are said to recognise the shortcomings of conventional approaches and are willing to try alternative arrangements. Moreover, they have positioned themselves as platform members, but not as platform officials, in efforts to avoid a sense of distance or detachment from platform activities. They command trust among other members and play supportive, advisory roles. They may also be valued for their perceived neutrality; the resource persons may be approached to arbitrate disagreements (interviews RIUN2311ABD, RIUN2411KAA, RIUN2411ABF).

Platform members have increasingly begun to contribute their own resources in order to arrange platform events (on the cowpea/soybean/livestock platform, this occurs through voluntary contributions, while on the cassava platform, this occurs through formal membership fees). The country team sees this as a clear sign that members have derived sufficient benefits from participation to invest themselves in the continuation of activities (interview RIUN2211ABA).

Respondents noted that much of the momentum within the platforms is derived in the first instance from the configuration of individuals that has come together, not interactions between the organisations that they represent. The country programme has sought to ensure some degree of permanent representation by member organisations; it requested

ADPs and NARIs, for instance, to nominate dedicated desk officers to interface not just with the platforms, but also with other elements of RIU-Nigeria. One respondent also raised the importance of gaining the trust of community leaders to ensure that a full cross-section of a community is enrolled in platform activities (interview RIUN2211ABC). In Kano, for instance, the country team had to first forge good relationships with the men of one farming community before women would be allowed to participate in platform activities.

There is also a persuasive tie-in between ‘on-the-ground’ platform activities and more macro-level policy advocacy. The country programme has supported policy appraisals in the cassava and cowpea-soybean sub-sectors. The former has since been presented to the National Assembly's House Committee on Agriculture RIU-Nigeria has been invited to present a memorandum once the Cassava Bill, which is currently being drafted, is presented for public debate. The policy appraisal of the cowpea-soybean sub-sector has also been submitted to the relevant sector regulatory agency. In both instances, RIU-Nigeria was able to leverage its networks — both within the platforms and beyond — to ensure the inclusion of perspectives from actors, who may otherwise not have access to policy consultations. One respondent did predict that the run-up to and immediate aftermath of the April 2011 elections would put a temporary halt to political decisions.

According to respondents, RIU-Nigeria has served as a ‘platform incubator’, supporting their early development with the intention of handing them over to others to oversee as they mature. At the time of data collection, ARCN, for instance, was said to have plans to phase the RIU-supported platforms into its upcoming West African Agricultural Development Project (WAAPP). The operational units of this project are so-called ‘adopted villages’, and the intention is to contextualise the existing platforms — or to set up new ones — to serve as arenas for multi-stakeholder action on innovation. The aquaculture platform is said to be among the first wave of platforms to be incorporated under the auspices of the World Bank-funded WAAPP project (interviews RIUN2211ABA and RIUN2311ABD; RIU-Nigeria, 2010a).

Indeed, in efforts to extract lessons for its planned activities, ARCN has carried out evaluations of the cassava and cowpea/soybean/livestock platforms. Among others, these delivered positive assessments of the working arrangements that had been put in place

since the inception of the platforms, with the caveat that their maturation required continued support by RIU-Nigeria or an equivalent entity (interviews RIUN2211ABA and RIUN2211ABB).

### **3.1a Food and fodder: Cowpea, soybean and livestock<sup>12</sup>**

The cowpea/soybean/livestock platform was inaugurated in March 2009, but soon ‘sub-divided’ itself into two smaller groupings. These have opted for slightly different foci, based on the agro-ecological spread of the target crops. One platform is based in Kano and tends to concentrate on issues related to cowpea, while the other meets in Kaduna and works primarily on soybean. The Kano platform has a membership of approximately 25 organisations, while the Kaduna platform has a membership of approximately 20 organisations. As with the other commodity-based platforms, the two cowpea/ soybean/ livestock platforms have also elected officials to perform dedicated functions. Collectively, the platform officials are said to relay information between the two platforms and to organise ‘reunion meetings’ for collective exchanges of experience. The ADP in Kano is said to exhibit particular leadership in the cowpea platform; its representative is described as ‘showing lots of entrepreneurship’ (interview RIUN2211ABC). There is also overlap between the aquaculture and cowpea/soybean/livestock platforms in terms of membership as a result of the potential to use legumes as components of fish feed.

The activities of the platform might be thought of in terms of three main thrusts. Firstly, the platform has sought to act as a channel for making available improved cowpea varieties during the 2010 cropping season. These varieties convey both ‘dual-use’ and striga-resistance. The former enables the use of leafy residues as fodder for livestock (particularly critical during the dry seasons), while the latter curtails crop losses and the need for farmers to seek alternative farmlands away from infected areas. RIU-Nigeria has collaborated with the Amahdu Bello University, a private seed company (Seed Project Ltd.) and the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) to distribute the improved cowpea

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<sup>12</sup> Unless otherwise stated, this section is based upon information available on the RIU-Nigeria cowpea/soybean/livestock platform website: <http://www.researchintouse.com/programmes/riu-nigeria/riu-ng41innovplat-cowpeasoy.html>

varieties to 3000 farmers in Kaduna and Kano states. These included 100 farmers who are affiliated with the cowpea/soybean/livestock platform.

Such efforts directly complement the second thrust of work: the post-harvest processing and packaging of cowpea through solarisation and triple bagging. Weevils (*Callosobruchus maculatus*) have caused serious post-harvest losses to farmers, who have sought to tackle the problem through the application of chemicals. This, however, carries the risk of making the cowpeas toxic; human consumption of treated cowpeas is known to have led to sickness and death. Solarisation offers means of killing most pest-eggs, larvae and adult weevils through exposure to high temperature. Complemented by triple bagging — the storage of cowpea in two polyethylene and one polypropylene bags — farmers can protect and conserve the cowpeas for long-periods of time and avoid the use of chemicals.

RIU-Nigeria partnered with IITA, Purdue University, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, ADPs in six states, a private sector bag manufacturing company, along with media outlets, cowpea farmers' associations and community leaders to roll out the solarisation and triple-bagging technique to an estimated 600,000 farmers. RIU-Nigeria played a role in 'bringing the pieces of the puzzle together': persuading the ADPs of the importance of training their staff in the technique; convincing the bag manufacturing company of the market that existed for the bags; making a case to the IITA-Purdue University research project that RIU could assist in reaching greater numbers of farmers; and farmers themselves of the advantages of the technique.

There were also reports that counterfeit bags had begun to emerge on the market. This was explained as a signal of the high demand that had existed for the bags and the inability of current institutional arrangements to meet them. Indeed, the coalition of partners was said to be searching for alternative companies to take over the manufacture of the bags due to initial contractual conditions, which had created a monopoly for and guaranteed a 50% indemnity loss to the one in charge (RIU-Nigeria 2010a).

The third working thrust centres on the promotion of a rust-resistant soybean variety. Here, again, RIU-Nigeria partnered with IITA, Ahmadu Bello University and the Seed Project

Company Ltd. to make available improved seed to farmers through their associations or collaborating NGOs. While these associations or organisations purchased the seed, RIU-Nigeria facilitated its packaging and distribution. In addition, the platform — through RIU-Nigeria — recruited two consultants to analyse the consequences of the importation of cooking oil on the development of a domestic vegetable oil sub-sector based on soybean. Representatives of the private sector on the platform raised their concerns over the impact of trade policy that encouraged the importation of cheap animal fats, which were marketed at low prices as vegetable-based cooking oil. Collectively, the representatives had approached various authorities with their concerns, only to be directed to others whose remits were deemed to cover such issues. The consultancy reports were expected to provide evidence to back the private sector's concern and, hence, strengthen their advocacy position in pursuit of standards for vegetable oil.

### **3.1.b Liquid networks: Aquaculture<sup>13</sup>**

In terms of its initial priorities, the aquaculture platform set out to tackle the lack of availability of good quality and locally produced fingerlings, brood stock and fish feed at affordable prices. Fish farmers had relied largely on imported and expensive fish feed; locally-produced varieties, although more affordable, were often of poor quality. RIU-Nigeria had identified know-how within the Nigerian Institute of Oceanography and Marine Research (NIOMR), National Institute of Freshwater Fisheries Research (NIFFR), the Raw Materials Research and Development Council and the private sector that could be pooled to produce good quality fish feed locally that could be sold at lower prices. RIU-Nigeria facilitated a joint research and development initiative between the organisations to produce fish meal from low-value tilapia and clupeids. In addition, it sought the involvement of the Federal Institute for Industrial Research and the Federal Department of Fisheries in the initiative. Due to strike action by NIOMR and NIFFR, research at these organisations came to a halt in July 2010. Nonetheless, by November 2010, the collaboration had succeeded in generating samples of fish meal and fish feed and was preparing for commercial-scale production (RIU-Nigeria, 2010a).

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<sup>13</sup> Unless otherwise stated, this section is based upon information available on the RIU-Nigeria aquaculture website: <http://www.researchintouse.com/programmes/riu-nigeria/riu-ng46innoplat-aquaculture.html>

At the outset, platform members also realised that there was clear scope to develop integrated fish and vegetable farming. The potential benefits of the practice were manifold: employment generation, improvements in household-level food security and livelihoods, along with the effective use of natural resources. However, the recycling of water demanded careful monitoring of water quality. The platform would seek to produce a set of farm management guidelines that would minimise the risk of cross-contamination.

A shortage in well-qualified service providers had led to the spread of poor-performing fingerlings and brood stock. A further task for the platform was, thus, the identification of reliable service providers, and the forging of productive relationships to them. In this, it would seek the involvement of the Federal Department of Fisheries in implementing a certification system for fish farmers and service providers.

Aquaculture sector stakeholders were said to show nascent business acumen. RIU-Nigeria would support these efforts by providing training in integrated aquaculture-horticulture, fish stock management and business management to platform members. However, one critical stakeholder group that was absent from the equation was the banking sector. Indeed, RIU-Nigeria has sought to forge stronger relationships with the banking sector across all of its commodity-based platforms. Fidelity Bank appears to have been among the most willing to pursue adjustments to its financial products in efforts to make them compatible with the needs of farmers. In addition, the platform would seek to support the business potential of the sector by exploring means of adding value to fish through smoking or drying, filleting and packaging, and developing access to both domestic and external markets.

The picture that emerged from discussions with respondents is one of a platform that is composed of pockets of activity, firstly, along spatial lines and, secondly, along value chain categories (interviews RIUN2211ABC and RIUN2311ABD). The aquaculture platform would come to operate through zonal units in the north-central belt of Nigeria. One would be centred in Idah (in Kogi State), while another would be based in Zaria (in Kaduna State) and the third in Kaduna (the capital of Kaduna State). This strategy sought to try to reach as

many fish farmers as possible, given the geographical spread of fish farming. The first aquaculture meeting in May 2009, which brought together stakeholders from all three locations, involved participatory value chain analysis and break-out sessions in groups of value chain actors. Input providers, fish farmers, processors and traders came together to discuss common challenges. An upshot appears to have been that these groups have continued to interact with each other outside platform meetings. Traders may exchange information on market prices, while fingerling and brood stock producers might exchange information on demand.

Nonetheless, the platform was not deemed to be fragmented. Rather, it was seen as showing a high level of self-organisation and initiative. These were attributed to comparatively strong private sector involvement in aquaculture and 'proactive impulse' that this had inculcated among other stakeholders. As an example, one respondent (RIUN2311ABC) referred to a recent effort by the zonal platform in Kaduna to source fingerlings from a NIFFRI branch that was located far away from the city. According to the respondent, this is an indication that the linkages have been made and the platform members keep them alive. All zonal platforms have elected 'officials' and resource persons, but the momentum appears to stem from the 'rank-and-file' members themselves. The same respondent suggested that this might be partly explained by the rather homogeneous membership of the platforms, compared to those operating in the two other commodity sectors. In Idah, the platform consisted of high numbers of fingerling producers and processors, while in Kaduna, there were particularly high numbers of female fish farmers and processors. In Zaria, in turn, fish farmers, processors and researchers made up the bulk of the platform. Nonetheless, elected officials still play important roles in facilitating information exchange between the three zonal platforms.

As section 3.2 will discuss in more detail, as the RIU-Nigeria programme evolved, it began to pursue more boldly activities that were not within a strict reading of its original remit. Among others, the programme, through the aquaculture platform, began to collaborate with the Diocesan Development Services (DDS). The collaboration centred on a yam seed project, which built upon RNRRS outputs. Funding for the project had come to an end some years ago and the RIU-Nigeria programme offered a means of continuing to extend its

outputs to stakeholders; the settings of its aquaculture activities overlapped with yam growing areas.

### 3.1.c Strong roots: Cassava<sup>14</sup>

The cassava platform was inaugurated in February 2009. Based in Abia State, the membership of the platform consists of approximately 30 organisations, which regularly send one or two representatives to platform events. The member organisations include banks and other financial institutions, research institutes, farmers' groups, small-scale processors (or 'fabricators'), ADPs and retailers. Compared to the platforms in the other two commodity sectors in which RIU-Nigeria works, the cassava platform is said to show a greater degree of organisation (interviews RIUN2211ABC and RIUN2411ABF): it holds regular meetings, keeps minutes of its meetings, shares these with the RIU programme, requests monthly financial contributions from its members to sustain activities (the registration fee is \$3.30 and the monthly membership fee is \$0.70),<sup>15</sup> and is in the process of becoming a formal cooperative society. In addition to the 'management functionalities' present on other platforms (a chair, vice-chair, secretary and treasurer), the cassava platform is said to have also appointed a public relations officer (interview RIUN2211ABC). There are signs that representatives of member organisations debrief their 'constituents' after innovation platform meetings. RIU-Nigeria attends meetings when possible; a field assistant, who is employed on a flexible basis, assists in arranging meetings and other events and liaises between the platform and RIU. The country programme met the costs of the inaugural meeting of the cassava — and other commodity-based — platforms. There was some initial scepticism among stakeholders; many had been contacted in 2007 during the programme design process, but had heard little of the programme since. The willingness of stakeholders to contribute monthly membership fees and to donate venues for events is a sign that the platform is generating benefits for its members.

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<sup>14</sup> Unless otherwise stated, this section is based upon information available on the RIU-Nigeria cassava platform website: <http://www.researchintouse.com/programmes/riu-nigeria/riu-ng45innoplat-cassava.html>

<sup>15</sup> RIU-Nigeria (2010b) Cassava Innovation Platform Report. Available online: <http://www.researchintouse.com/programmes/riu-nigeria/riu-ng45innoplat-cassava.html>

Respondents recalled that soon after its formation the cassava platform split into two groups due to tension among the initial set of members (interviews RIUN2211ABC and RIUN2411ABF). Each faction, led by strong leaders, claimed to be ‘the real’ RIU-supported cassava platform. RIU-Nigeria was pressured into taking sides. The programme continued to work with the platform that still convened at the location of the first meeting. Increasingly, members of the second platform have begun to participate in these efforts as well and RIU-Nigeria is witnessing a greater degree of convergence between the two groups. They sent equal numbers of participants to a recent cassava post-harvest ‘training of trainers’ event. After the event, the two platforms were said to try to outdo each other as to which one could replicate training fastest. RIU-Nigeria sees this as healthy competition and feels that there is room for many more self-formed platforms of this nature.

There is said to be a growing entrepreneurial streak among cassava platform members. Nonetheless, they were said to lack the same level of ‘business-mindedness’ as their counterparts on the aquaculture platform; the former are still undergoing a metamorphosis, which is not yet complete (interview RIUN2211ABC).

The same individual noted that it has taken time for the members of the platform to settle into their roles, but that they are gradually beginning to see the platform as an opportunity for them to express their opinions. The female members of the platform, for instance, are beginning to find their voice. “They have always known what they wanted, but they may not have known how to say it” (interview RIUN2211ABC).

The platform has been official recognised by the Abia State Government, which has expressed its willingness to partner with the platform through statutory budget allocations and on land acquisition issues in order to set up out-growers schemes for planting material (RIU-Nigeria, 2010b). Indeed, the intention is to establish commercial cassava plantations to operate as stem banks across 3 senatorial zones (interview RIUN2411ABF).

Given Nigeria’s status as a major global producer of cassava, the sub-sector was a natural focus for RIU activities in the country. In 2002, the Obasanjo administration had instituted a Presidential Initiative on Cassava, which sought to boost local production and processing in

efforts to enhance domestic food self-sufficiency and augment foreign export earnings. The policy called for measures — such as financing and import restrictions — to increase demand for cassava-based products, including flour, starch and ethanol. However, the policy was not enacted into law and soon after assuming office Obasanjo's successor altered import restrictions such that low-cost cassava-based raw material was allowed to re-enter the country (interview RIUN2411ABF).

Nonetheless, cassava remained a critical food security and livelihood crop in Nigeria. In recognition of this, the cassava innovation platform would, seek to increase the availability of and outgrowers' access to high-yielding, early-maturing, mosaic disease resistant varieties of cassava. The International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA), along with its partners, had made inroads in the development of planting material for such varieties. However, these organisations were not in positions to propagate or disseminate it. RIU-Nigeria and IITA, along with the Abia State ADP and relevant NARIs, had considerable synergies in their activities and agendas and were able to look for broad-scale impact collectively.

In terms of post-harvest activities, the cassava innovation platform would attempt to expand the business potential of unprocessed cassava, cassava processing equipment and processed cassava. This would include promoting the development and manufacture of hand-held cassava peeling devices, as well as the production of consumer-preferred odourless *fufu* and selected confectionary products.

The platform would also facilitate the participation of its members in public consultation for a new bill that would reinvigorate the market for cassava-based products. The platform would commission an analysis of policies related to cassava flour, and, following extensive stakeholder input, present the report to the National Assembly's House Committee on Agriculture.

At time of data collection, the platform's policy advocacy function was said to be incomplete and there was some concern over the consequences of RIU-Nigeria's planned phasing out (interview RIUN2411ABF). The country programme had provided critical support to such

efforts. The current policy environment was described as favourable (the current government intends to reinvigorate the cassava sub-sector), and there will be a guaranteed market for cassava-based products (as the policy will be made into law).

### **3.2. Impossible to predict: Emergent opportunities for innovation**

Following the programmatic reviews in 2009, the Africa Country Programmes were accorded greater autonomy to interpret their mandates and organise their activities (see section 2.4.). A critical enabling mechanism in this was a newly created Flexibility Fund; essentially, seed money that the country programme could use to support innovation activities that may have been outside a strict reading of its remit.

The country coordinator — described by various individuals as an ‘out-of-box thinker’ and ‘willing to take risks’ — sought to bank upon this newly accorded independence by extending the identity of RIU-Nigeria into post-conflict rehabilitative work and efforts that explicitly targeted vulnerable women. Some of these activities involved forging cross-platform ties. Elsewhere, RIU-Nigeria identified an opportunity to link up RIU-Best Bets activities with its cowpea/soybean/livestock platform. Finally, RIU-Nigeria also cast itself as a ‘trade envoy’, facilitating an exchange visit by a Nigerian animal feed company to the RIU sister programme in Sierra Leone.

#### **3.2.a Post-conflict rehabilitative work: A role for innovation**

Following an immediate emergency response to the violence that had erupted in areas around Jos between 2008 and 2010, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) approached RIU-Nigeria to explore a possible collaborative arrangement to rehabilitate the agricultural-based livelihoods in Bauchi and Plateau States. The country programme was in a position to leverage its partnership with the Institute of Agricultural Research and Premier Seeds Ltd., formed under the cowpea/soybean/livestock platform, to distribute improved seed varieties of cowpea, sorghum and maize to an estimated 210 households. Funding for this activity was made available by the United States Embassy in Nigeria. Due to a late delivery of funds, the seeds did not reach farmers ahead of the planting season in 2010.

They are now expected to be delivered in April 2011. The fact that RIU-Nigeria had itself been approached to be a part of this effort was taken as a sign of the ‘name recognition’ that it was amassing.<sup>16</sup>

### **3.2.b Addressing social vulnerability: An unexpected link between platforms**

A partnership with a rural widows’ association in Cross Rivers State proved to be a link through which RIU-Nigeria could forge closer ties between its activities in the cassava platform and cowpea/soybean/livestock platform. The country programme has worked with the Abanbeke Development Association (ADA) to enhance their access to land suitable for cultivation, financial capital, improved inputs, markets, as well as post-harvest processing and storage. Among others, RIU-Nigeria facilitated the participation of ADA in a training event on developing cassava-based businesses. The event, organised by IITA and the Nigerian Root Crop Research Institute (NRCRI), allowed its participants to gain skills in the production of odourless *fufu* and industrial starch.

It was not only the cassava platform that could bring its activities to bear for the benefit of ADA. The cowpea/soybean/livestock value chain was also able to mobilise its partnerships to secure access to rust-resistant soybean and dual purpose cowpea for members of the association. Although not a typical growing area for the crops, ADA members were keen to trial their cultivation in the southern part of the country due to their high protein content and household food security potential. RIU-Nigeria is backing up such efforts by making available a ‘capacity building grant’ to ADA, which will meet the costs of agricultural advisory services and follow-up visits to the field.<sup>17</sup>

### **3.2.c Forging cross-programme ties: Livestock nutrition and health**

Fodder producers associated with the cowpea/soybean/livestock platform had faced difficulties with storage and transportation of crop residues. RIU-Nigeria tapped into its Flexibility Fund to support a private company, Wetlands Associates Ltd., in finalising the

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<sup>16</sup> [Hhttp://www.researchintouse.com/news/101101red-cross.html](http://www.researchintouse.com/news/101101red-cross.html)H

<sup>17</sup> [Hhttp://riu.typepad.com/nigeria/2011/03/3000-widows-supported-through-riu-nigeria-capacity-building-of-ada.html](http://riu.typepad.com/nigeria/2011/03/3000-widows-supported-through-riu-nigeria-capacity-building-of-ada.html)H

development, and eventual piloting, of its prototype baler. This would enable the transport of fodder to markets or specific grazing areas during the dry season. Contributions from the Flexibility Fund also went into supporting the setting up of a baling service — instead of having to purchase balers, farmers could ‘hire’ them to transport fodder to specific locations (interview RIUN2211ABA’; RIU-Nigeria 2010a).

Both the fodder produced by platform members, as well as the baling service, would find new markets through a RIU-Nigeria sister programme that originated in Uganda. Supported by another ‘arm’ of RIU — the Best Bets initiative — this Stamp Out Sleeping Sickness (SOS) project sought to bring migratory herds of livestock to a standstill in order to inoculate them against sleeping sickness. RIU-N facilitated an arrangement whereby livestock keepers were ensured of a reliable supply (in terms of quantity and delivery) of fodder, the fodder producers on the cowpea/soybean/livestock platform had access to a ready market and the SOS project could administer the immunisation treatment.<sup>18</sup>

### **3.2.d RIU-Nigeria as a ‘trade envoy’**

RIU-Nigeria led a trade delegation from Feed Masters Nigeria Ltd. (an animal feed company) to visit its sister programme, RIU-Sierra Leone. The delegates met sector stakeholders, including several poultry farmers and poultry input producers. The encounters culminated in a trade agreement whereby Feed Masters Nigeria would supply 50 MT of poultry feed to poultry farmers in Sierra Leone. Natural Resources Organization Ltd., a Sierra Leonean company, would be responsible for redistribution. Sierra Leone faces a deficiency in the supply of poultry feed, which the Nigerian private sector can partially address (RIU-Nigeria, 2010a).

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.researchintouse.com/news/101029cowpeas.html>

## 4. LESSONS

### 4.1 Brokering

The RIU-Nigeria country programme leverages its role as a broker through several channels — by facilitating the formation and maturation of innovation platforms as entities for collective action, by negotiating new partnerships (between researchers and extension agents, farmers and credit facilities, and farmers and the private sector), and by engaging with the policy space to create more conducive environments for innovation.

However, the country programme — or more specifically, its core team — is not alone in carrying out this brokering activity. The resource persons who support the platforms also serve to mediate access to information, seek solutions to disagreements between platform members, and communicate between platforms and their broader professional networks. Individual platform members themselves also perform brokering functions, as is manifested by the interaction that takes place between the sub-groups on the aquaculture platform, for instance.

Indeed, one member of the aquaculture platform exemplifies the ‘multiple hats’ that a broker often wears. The individual is a researcher by training and serves as a platform resource person. In his private capacity he also breeds fingerlings. As a breeder, he sees the platform as a way to expand his network with farmers (his market). He supplies fingerlings to farmers, who in turn might also appeal to his role as a resource person in finding information about good quality, low-cost feed or market potential for table-sized fish. Such advice benefits the entire platform, not only those farmers, who have purchased fingerlings from him. The individual often also refers farmers to other suppliers of fingerlings, who have excess to offload; he alone is unable to meet current demand. Instead of compromising his business, the individual maintains that such collaborations maintain a coherent value chain that pays off for all its members.

By all accounts, ARCN also plays an important brokering role by raising the visibility of the country programme, facilitating collaborative arrangements between RIU-Nigeria and the

NARIs that it oversees, and ensuring access to high-level decision-makers. Having a good working relationship with a federal institute of this nature was felt to be crucial for a project the size of RIU-Nigeria to make its presence felt in a country as vast and complex as Nigeria.

#### **4.2. What does RIU-Nigeria's brokering capacity hinge upon?**

Respondents identified several factors that they felt allowed RIU-Nigeria to play a role as a broker. Those familiar with the design process referred to the careful planning that had taken place at the outset, which delineated a clear set of initial boundaries for the project. Indeed, part of the legitimacy of the programme was seen to lie in the fact that it had opted for a manageable set of activities, as opposed to spreading itself too thinly. Some individuals also acknowledged the contributions of country strategy team members, who had advocated for a management structure that could readily respond to emergent opportunities and that was comfortable with a trial and error approach. Although these features may have been watered down in the final design of the programme, they nonetheless left a mark.

Another feature of the programme that was seen to have allowed RIU-Nigeria to carry out a brokering role was its access to external funds that it did not have to divide among a consortium of implementing partners. This gave the programme a level of autonomy and efficiency that it may not have otherwise had. This was also said to have contributed to the programme's neutrality, allowing it to avoid conflict with other entities.

Indeed, neutrality was felt to have been a critical asset for the programme. One respondent referred more than once to the 'turf wars' that have existed between various actors in the Nigerian agricultural sector. One factor that appears to be holding back the formation of collaborative linkages between policy, research, extension, farmers, the private sector and credit facilities in the country is the fear of loss of authority. An independent arena in which actors can participate on a voluntary basis alleviates perceived threats to existing positions. One interviewee recalls that the head of one ADP had initial misgivings about participating in an RIU-mediated platform. The prospect of changing the existing system would entail a 'renegotiation of the power balance' — something the ADPs were generally weary of.

However, involvement in the platform served to (re)demonstrate the relevance of the ADP in bringing about improvements to agriculture-based livelihoods, albeit through new working practices. Indeed, the head of the ADP in question “has since become the biggest advocate of the RIU approach” (interview RIUN2211ABA).

The affiliation with ARCN was said to have accorded the programme a high degree of credibility, certainly within the research sector and among national policy-makers. It also speaks of the programme’s willingness to recognise what works within its specific operating context, even if it meant breaking with a more universal design: instead of setting up a National Innovation Coalition (as many other Africa Country Programmes did) to further their policy agenda, RIU-Nigeria opted for an institutional home within a government agency as one strategy for gaining access to policy communities. Another sign of the programme’s readiness to devise context-appropriate solutions was its decision to recruit an ‘ad hoc advisory group’, which also facilitated access to policy-makers, often directly from the commodity-specific platforms.

The platforms were felt to have been essential in building mutual interest and trust among stakeholders. Within them, the country programme pursued an initial set of activities that would bring quick and tangible benefits to stakeholders. This, it was believed, would ensure buy-in. With hindsight, the independence of the platforms (which may have initially arisen out of necessity) was considered a definite advantage. Not only did it serve to build self-initiative among platform members, it also ‘freed’ the programme team to craft a portfolio beyond the platforms alone.

Following the 2009 reviews, the reporting burden for the programme was eased, allowing it to focus even more explicitly on its immediate operating environment. Indeed, the complexity and dynamism of this setting would easily consume the country team’s full attention. The team could now direct its resources towards closer monitoring of programme activities for its own purposes and taking corrective measures when activities did not progress as planned.

Moreover, the newly accorded autonomy gave the country programme the possibility of breaking free from a strict adherence to any pre-defined log-frame. RIU-Nigeria was at times approached by other initiatives in search of joint activities with the programme, and it now had the leeway to respond to these. Indeed, respondents noted that another feature that supported RIU-Nigeria's role as a broker was the name recognition and media attention that it enjoyed.

RIU-Nigeria has also been encouraged by the overall RIU management to align itself, where possible, with existing structures (as opposed to creating new ones). While this has improved efficiency and extended the programme's reach, some felt that it had also contributed towards difficulties in assigning attribution — a factor that is said to add to the nebulous nature of brokering.

One respondent likened the role played by RIU-Nigeria to that formerly assumed by marketing or producer boards. In contrast to RIU-Nigeria, however, these boards were legal entities. This may have hindered their malleability (interview RIUN2411ABF).

Another respondent noted that RIU-Nigeria's use of language already signals its intention to do things differently: "projects usually talk about dissemination; this project talks about adoption" (interview RIUN2211ABA). The suggestion appears to be that RIU-Nigeria goes beyond leaving an improved variety at farmers' doorstep to understanding what factors influence whether or not s/he will use it, how and why. Although a break from conventional practice, it does not acknowledge the full scope of RIU-Nigeria's role, which extends beyond targeting grassroots level action to pursuing simultaneous and complementary policy change.

#### **4.c. Impact: Sign of institutional change?**

In terms of the impact of RIU-Nigeria, most respondents maintained that it was too soon to tell. Some also suggested that within the vast, overall development sector of Nigeria, the programme was too small to have left an overarching, transformative imprint. One individual noted that "some work still needs to be done" to alter the cultures of agricultural

training, funding and service delivery to truly speak of a paradigm shift (interview RIUN2211ABB). Part of the challenge lies in the rapid turnover of officials in public sector agencies. The RIU approach — at least in the early stages — hinges upon individual relationships. The contact person for the programme may be rotated with short notice, just as productive working relationships are beginning to emerge and deeper, organisation-level inroads are being made. Indeed, an issue that the RIU programme as a whole must still tackle is how to systematise these relationships without depriving them of flexibility and dynamism through excessive formalisation.

Simultaneously, others speculated that within the confines of the space that it had carved out for itself, the programme had shown that the RIU approach can work. One respondent claimed that “RIU has become a household name” and that “this time it’s business, but not as usual” (interview RIUN2311ABD). RIU’s value chain approach is appreciated and the structures that it has in place on the ground are seen as a major strength. Indeed, although not the sole component of the country programme portfolio, the innovation platforms were felt to be a feature of the programme that could most readily be attributed to RIU-Nigeria. (*ibid.*).

Another respondent suggested that “RIU-N is credited with promoting a new culture of working” (interview RIUN2411ABF). In the past, farmers and other actors within the agricultural sector have been reluctant to collaborate with government projects. RIU-Nigeria has given them confidence by demonstrating that partnerships — when skilfully mediated — can be of direct benefit to them. While RIU-Nigeria has engaged in activities that emulate rather classical Transfer-Of-Technology-style approaches, respondents also pointed to a range of other, novel approaches: its ability to negotiate arrangements that promote value-adding, post-harvest stages to agricultural produce, access to new or more secure markets, and a revisit of the policy environment in agricultural sub-sectors.

RIU-Nigeria has positioned itself as a catalyst with the intention of stimulating effects that cascade beyond platforms and its immediate, active partners. Depending on the efficacy of farmers’ representative organisations, for instance, the programme can reach a wide farmer constituency with tangible, readily quantifiable benefits (such as access to improved

varieties and management practices). One respondent, who follows the activities of the platforms closely, gave an overall positive assessment of the efficacy of platform members in representing the interests of their constituents, whether farmers or others (interview RIUN2211ABC). The consequences on more qualitative institutional change, on the other hand, are more difficult to detect.

The impact that is beginning to become noticeable has materialised recently; most respondents were in agreement that more time is needed to consolidate these. Among the outstanding issues is the cultivation of a stronger relationship with the National Agricultural Extension Liaison Service. Described as “a research institute, whose mandate rests on getting research into use” (interview RIUN2211ABA), the agency is seen as having a clear thematic affinity to RIU-Nigeria and has already been a key partner for the programme.

In terms of the future, RIU-Nigeria recently brought together a range of stakeholders to discuss the continuity and sustainability of its activities (see report from the November 2010 Learning Event). Among others, stakeholders expressed the need for a flexible arrangement of ‘zonal coordinating officers’ to better anchor platform activities at the grassroots level. Separately, respondents stated a continued demand for an RIU-style initiative, one which could charge its users for innovation service provision.

RIU-Nigeria is in a position to offer process lessons that can impact the future practice of other projects, programmes or organisations that are looking to work with a government agency. Indeed, at the time of data collection, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was developing a proposal to strengthen private sector activity in Nigeria. The RIU country programme was approached to offer its lessons of being embedded within a government organisation and mediating collaborative work between government and other sectors (Ugbe, 2010). Among other suggestions, RIU-Nigeria urged the nascent project to accept the limitations that working with the government may entail, including the lack of basic infrastructure, such as office space and power. The country programme also urged patience; the process of forging an effective working relationship can be slow. There is often implicit suspicion within the public sector of development projects. They are seen as self-serving and their national staff may be viewed as unpatriotic. Still, the public sector will

inevitably be an important participant in any development initiative. Indeed, by seeking its close involvement, the public sector is given a sense of responsibility and an impetus to perform accordingly. In terms of pursuing overall impact, particularly a change in mindsets and institutional practice, it is better to work “from the inside” (interview RIUN2211ABA).

Collectively, the interest of UNDP and the World Bank (through WAAPP) suggests that donors are willing to experiment on a small scale and to take a risk with alternative practices. However, it is too soon to tell whether these are tentative signs of a broader shift in the culture of overseas development assistance.

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## ANNEX 1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

### Background

RIU, launched by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom government (DFID) in 2006 with a budget of £40 million, was conceived as an entirely new sort of programme. As a successor to DFID's 10-year, £200-million Renewable Natural Resources Research Strategy (RNRRS), RIU's objective was to extract impact from excellent but underused agricultural research.

A series of reviews have helped sharpen RIU's operational focus and better frame its lesson-learning and this is now beginning to give shape to what an innovation-centric agricultural programme might look like. The RIU programmes portfolio is structured around three different approaches to putting research into use: An Asia Challenge Innovation Fund; Research into Use Case Studies; Best Bets activities, and country programmes in Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Zambia. These Africa country programmes were established with an explicit agenda of experimenting with ways of building capacity that enables research to be put into use. The main tools deployed as part of this agenda were innovation platforms: a family of approaches focused on linking organisations relevant to various topics where the private sector is or should be prominent.

Although the RIU country programmes in Africa initially struggled to work out how to explore the *research into use* question, since September 2009 the scope of the country programmes has been slimmed down to ensure a more manageable set of experiments, and they are now starting to build evidence on ways of strengthening innovation capacity by connecting different parts of the innovation systems in which they are working.

Some of the country programmes are led by private companies; others are an integral part of policy bodies or ministry departments. These differences in institutional arrangements have led to a number of different ways in which the country programmes are linked into the wider policy and economic environment.

### **Specific assignment**

The CRT now wishes to develop an institutional history of the Africa country programmes with a view to gaining an embedded understanding of (i) the specific mechanism associated with ‘innovation platforms’ and, (ii) the function of the country programme as a brokering/ intermediary organisation within wider innovation and development landscapes. This recognises that the country programmes deploy “innovation platforms” as just one of an array of tactics to enable innovation.

The approach of developing an institutional history for this task responds to the recognition that arrangements and approaches deployed by the country programmes have evolved significantly over time. While there is a range of cases of opportunities grasped by the country programmes, some approaches have been less effective, but nevertheless have important lessons for others. The emphasis in this task is on reflective learning.

The institutional history approach also recognises that strategies and tactics adopted arise out of a context and history (hence the emphasis on gaining an embedded understanding). It is, therefore, important to explain emerging practices in terms of shaping contexts and histories. In the case of the country programmes, that context includes the history and evolution of the RIU programme as a whole; the history and evolution of the RIU country programme offices and the way they organised their work and learnt along the way; and the changing development context in which “innovation platforms are operating.”

Under the overall supervision of Drs Jeroen Dijkman and Andy Hall, Maija Hirvonen will undertake the following specific tasks

- i) Develop a detailed institutional history of the Africa country programme with a particular emphasis on exploring the way these evolved over time in response to the evolution of RIU and the local development, political and institutional environment. The cases for this detailed examination will be Nigeria and Malawi.
- ii) Develop a detailed account of the nature, role and function of intermediary/ brokering task (including the innovation platforms). The emphasis is on explaining in accessible language what it is actually that brokering involves. So that this task aligns with other research in RIU on brokering this task needs to

refer to the common set of questions that are being used (below). These should be viewed as a minimum set and can be expanded / modified for the purposes of this study as the consultant sees fit.

- iii) Based on the above develop a set of guiding principles for programme design for supporting intermediary agencies / brokers for enabling innovation and putting research into use.
- iv) Based on the above key policy messages for national and international support to agricultural research and innovation.
- v) The work will provide data and information and case documents which will pay specific attention to the history and evolution of the country programmes; innovation brokering in practice; guiding principles and policy implications.

#### Cross RIU questions to guide studies on brokering

1. Who are the intermediaries in innovation networks in different sub-sectors and what are their characteristics and functions?
  - a. How and why did the intermediaries emerge?
  - b. What are the activities they undertake?
  - c. How and why are they positioned in innovation networks and how do they contribute to innovation?
2. How and why do intermediaries engage in intermediation processes, (focusing on demand articulation, and network building and innovation process management in the selected networks).
  - a. How and why is the identified intermediary engaged in processes of innovation in the selected case study?
  - b. What is the role of the intermediary and how and why has this changed over time?
  - c. How and why do the intermediaries engage in the process of innovation demand articulation (demand articulation is here understood to encompass the question about relevance to different social groups, particularly poor people)
  - d. How and why do the intermediaries engage in the process of network building? What is the nature of their involvement?

- e. How and why do the intermediaries engage in the process of managing the innovation process over time?
3. How do other actors within the networks perceive the role of intermediary actors ?
4. How and why do intermediation processes affect the innovation process outcomes?
5. How and why do selected policies and other external factors aimed at supporting agriculture innovation affect the development of the intermediary domain of different sub-sectors?
6. How does the intermediary domain of different sub-sectors compare? Which factors affect this?

## ANNEX 2. EVOLUTION OF RIU-NIGERIA

July 2006	RIU established
August 2006	
September 2006	
October 2006	
November 2006	Scoping visit to Nigeria by members of the consortium managing RIU
December 2006	
January 2007	Fieldwork for and preliminary report of Country Assessment of Nigeria
February 2007	Country Assessment report completed
March 2007	Country assessment completed
April 2007	RIU-Nigeria fisheries assessment report completed
May 2007	
June 2007	RIU inception phase end date
July 2007	
August 2007	
September 2007	
October 2007	
November 2007	Concept note for Nigeria Country Strategy
December 2007	Institutional assessment of potential Innovation Platforms
January 2008	Draft Nigeria Country Strategy
February 2008	Consultations with two stakeholder groups Draft Nigeria Country Strategy submitted to SMT for comments
March 2008	SMT provides comments
April 2008	
May 2008	Final Nigeria Country Strategy submitted
June 2008	Country strategy development completed
July 2008	
August 2008	
September 2008	RIU-Nigeria Implementation Plan Expert Review Workshop
October 2008	RIU-Nigeria country team is recruited
November 2008	Work plan deepening meeting
December 2008	Commencement of Programme Implementation
January 2009	RIU-Nigeria implementation plan finalised
February 2009	First RIU-Nigeria IP inaugurated (Cassava)
March 2009	Second RIU-Nigeria IP inaugurated (Cowpea/Soybean)
April 2009	Meeting of RIU-N country programme consultants with RIU-Nigeria Team on RNRRS adoption by platforms
May 2009	Third RIU-Nigeria IP inaugurated (Aquaculture)
June 2009	RIU-Nigeria assist Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria in management of its research database
July 2009	Presentation of RIU-Nigeria policy report on policy directive of cassava flour to House Committee on Agriculture of the National Assembly  New director appointed for RIU  Technical review of Africa and Asia country programmes
August 2009	RIU-Nigeria develops 2-year work plan
September 2009	Collaboration planning meeting between RIU-Nigeria and International Institute for Tropical Agriculture/Purdue Improved Cowpea Storage

October 2009	First Zonal Aquaculture workshop held in Idah, Kogi State
November 2009	Second Zonal Aquaculture workshop held in Zaria, Kaduna State
December 2009	RIU-Nigeria meeting with Six Northern State Agricultural Development Programmes' Programme Managers
January 2010	RIU-Nigeria Team supervision of field demonstration of triple bagging technology by extension agents in six northern states
February 2010	Capacity building for fish farmers, NGOs, private sectors and Government parastatals (various training workshops)
March 2010	Aquaculture stakeholder's meeting on building local capacity for fish meal and its linkages to feed production in Nigeria
April 2010	Development of local partnership between RIU-Nigeria programme and Abuja office of International Committee of the Red Cross Society
May 2010	Distribution of CMD resistant variety in Abia state  Signing of protocol partnership of RIU-Nigeria intervention on fish
June 2010	Distribution of dual purpose cowpea and rust resistant varieties of soybean in Kaduna and Kano states  Opening-the-bags ceremonies (i.e. technology evaluation and at village level) conducted in 950 villages after the use of solarisation and triple bagging (hermetic) method of cowpea storage
July 2010	Entrepreneurial skill acquisition workshop on post harvest value addition to cassava
August 2010	Situation analysis of fodder availability, marketing channels and its implication on livestock production
September 2010	Evaluation of RIU-Nigeria activities by Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria(ARCN)
October 2010	Baseline profile of farmers involved in cowpea production, storage and marketing in Northern Nigeria report completed
November 2010	RIU-Nigeria Learning Event

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