

**OPERATIONALIZATION OF INNOVATION PLATFORMS
(IPS)**

ACTIVITY PLAN

APRIL 1 2009 – MARCH 31 2010

THE SL-RIU SECRETARIAT

APRIL 2009

General Guidelines for the Operationalization of Innovation Platforms

Introduction

The purpose of the Research into Use (RIU) Programme is to maximize the poverty reducing impact of the DFID funded natural resources research produced under the Renewable Natural Resources Research Strategy (RNRRS) in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. In so doing the programme also aims to increase understanding of how widespread use of research can be promoted. The Programme will also invest in getting into use knowledge from research undertaken by others if this is demanded by users and is complementary/ synergistic to use of outputs from research knowledge previously supported by DFID.

The hypothesis of the RIU is that *an innovation systems approach will prove more effective than linear approaches at getting research outputs into use for the benefit of the poor.* (See main RIU documents on www.researchintouse.com)

The Sierra Leone RIU Programme (SL-RIU) shall be implemented mainly through the partnership approach. This means that innovation platforms¹ supported shall initially be within organisations that the RIU shall partner with. Other platforms will/ may come on board as the Programme evolves. The programme shall support capacity development in these platforms; **develop an information market**; undertake communication activities in line with the RIU communication strategy; and undertake advocacy and policy influencing activities. In line with all the RIU country programmes, the SL-RIU shall embrace monitoring and learning activities guided by the MIL Group. It is intended that SL-RIU will be implemented in ways consistent with the aims of Sierra Leone's development objectives.

During the process of formulating the SL-RIU strategy and implementation plan the potential partners agreed to form the "*Partnership for Agricultural Innovation for Development*" (PAID-SL) which is a social business network drawing members from government ministries, research institutions, NGOs, universities, civil society, farmers and farmers' organizations. The SL-RIU and the PAID-SL have worked together to develop a strategy and implementation plan to guide the activities that will be supported by SL-RIU. The plan has three main pillars: (i) **Knowledge Broker linking demand for know-how and services with sources in Sierra Leone and elsewhere**; (ii) Demand Support supplying the means for rural actors to access and pay for services and (iii) an Innovation Facility to mobilize finance for good ideas.

This note is a guide on basic element to be considered in operationalizing the various innovation platforms in the context of SL – RIU / PAID-SL partnership.

¹ see www.researchintouse.com for definition of innovation platform

Aim

The overall goal is to institute procedures and processes to launch and operationalize identified Innovation Platforms in Sierra Leone.

Objectives

- Established procedures on key activities for the pilot phase
- Management modalities agreed and key partners identified
- Responsibilities assigned and accountability/reporting
- Identify and agree on key milestones/results of the pilot project

Methodology/approach

Seven Innovation Platforms (IPs) will be launched during the 1st Qtr (April – June 2009)). This will entail a) Institution Building of PAID-SL and its Secretariat in Freetown, its member organizations/businesses and regional/focal points in the provinces b) launching the three KM Services (Knowledge Brokerage, Demand Support Facility and Innovation Finance Facility) c) Agricultural Development/Natural Resources Policy Platform and d) two fast-track pilots (Chicken Feed and Solar Drying) in Kenema and Makeni respectively.

Main activities

In launching each of the IPs, these are steps in the process

1. Identify and assess potential members/participants for each IP
2. Facilitate interactive processes and sessions for group /trust building among organizations participating in each IP
3. Identify and assess the relevant RNRRS outputs to be used by each IP
4. Support platforms to identify and engage IP Facilitator(s)
5. Establish Learning Groups for each IP
6. Through the leadership of PAID and the Champions of Thematic cluster, identify Innovation Opportunities within each cluster
7. Organize and implement innovation investment event (IIEs)
8. Provide guidance/access to KM services (the initial audience should be stakeholders who are relevant to the fast-tracked innovation platforms)
9. Establish criteria to assess concepts for innovative ideas
10. Establish (on ad-hoc basis) Assessment/Review Team to evaluate concepts for innovative/bankable ideas.
11. Formulate proposal/draft business plan for successful concepts

Implementation Plan/Schedule

Main activity	Location	Timeframe	By whom	Expected result
Write concept notes (PAID-SL, Agric-Policy, KB, DSF, IFF, Solar Drying and Chicken Feed)	Freetown	April 2009	HAJ/DSS/FSK	Adopted concept notes for seven IPs
Identify and assess IP participants	Makeni, Kenema and Freetown	April 2009	FSK/HAJ/DSS	List of initial participants of each IP
Facilitate interactive sessions for IPs	Makeni, Kenema and Freetown	May 2009	HAJ/FSK/DSS	Basic operational modalities established for all IPs
Identify relevant RNRRS outputs for each IP	Makeni, Kenema and Freetown	May – October 2009	HAJ/FSK/DSS	List of RNRRS output adopted by all IPs
Identify and engage IP Facilitators	Makeni, Kenema and Freetown	May – October 2009	HAJ/FSK/DSS	ToRs of IP Facilitators agreed
Establish Learning Groups	Makeni, Kenema and Freetown	June 2009	FSK/HAJ/DSS	MIL systems established and agreed
Formulate Call for Innovative Ideas	Makeni, Kenema and Freetown	June 2009	DSS/HAJ/FSK	Call for Innovative Ideas publicised
Establish criteria to assess ideas	Freetown	July 2009	HAJ/FSK/DSS	Agreed Criteria
Identify review team for Innovative Ideas (within each IP)	Makeni, Kenema and Freetown	July 2009	DSS/FSK/HAJ	Review Team established and working principles agreed.
Organize and host Innovation Investment Events	Freetown, Makeni and Kenema	Sept 09 – Jan 10	HAJ	IIEs hosted with maximum participation

Management and administration

The overall management and administration of all SL-RIU activities lie within the purview of the SL-RIU Country Coordinator assisted by the NPF, NMLC and PAID Secretariat for adequate planning and implementation of the various activities. NMLC will take a lead in MIL issues. The NPF will take the lead in innovation platforms operations.

Each IP shall have a contact person within the RIU Secretariat. S/he shall be responsible for the day to day operational activities and will be supported by the CT in order to achieve the goals of the innovation platforms.

1. Capacity Building of PAID

SL Secretariat, Board of Directors and the constituent member organizations

Introduction

PAID –SL is a platform in its own right. In this respect, particular attention will be paid to build the capacity of the Secretariat, the board and the constituent/participating organization.

Background

PAID-SL has given thematic focus/priority areas that it will focus on: a) market access b) youth alternative livelihood and c) use of research. Each of these clusters have also identified Cluster Champions, who among other things will lead the process evolving innovative ideas within their specific clusters.

Aim

From this background, Capacity Building will should enhance the establishment of basic principles and procedures for effective and efficient functioning of the PAID – SL Secretariat and at the same time enhance the overall performance of the different/constituent organizations participating in PAID.

Objective

- Established systems for effective and efficient Secretariat functioning, professional Board of Director
- Systems and procedures instituted for proper management of member/constituent participating organization

Strategy

Firstly, an integrated capacity building (training, coaching, mentoring) strategy will be adopted focusing on adequate accommodation and accompaniment of PAID Secretariat and the board in its planning and executing functions and responsibilities assigned to it by the PAID general assembly. Furthermore, Cluster Members will be assessed in terms of capacity gaps in order to innovate. They shall also be supported through relevant and timely interactive processes, specific trainings and exposure visits.

Main activities

This will entail the following:

- Capacity building activities for the PAID Secretariat staff
- Board development activities and processes

- Capacity assessment/support service for the participating organizations

Timeframe

The initial activities will be implemented for a six month phase January – June 2009.

Management, Administration and Reporting

Mr. Abdulai Bun-Wai (PAID-SL Secretary) will be responsible for the day to day management of the PAID-SL Secretariat. In addition, he shall also co-ordinate board development activities and capacity building support services for all participating organizations.

2. Policy Platform

Background

Agric-Policy Platform will be launched in conjunction with MAFFS/ Sector Co-ordination mechanism. This platform focuses on policy matters relating to agriculture and natural resources sector in Sierra Leone.

Aim

The aim is to provide and present an informed position with and on-behalf of PAID members participating regarding policy matters that affect the agricultural and natural resources sectors.

Objectives

This platform will collaborate with the AAG/ATT of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security to advocate pro-poor agricultural development and natural resources policies and programmes.

Strategy/Main activities

The members of PAID that are focused on advocacy and lobby will be encouraged and supported to identify and influence governance policy on agriculture and natural resources sector. The processes shall be led by members of parliament who are already members of SL-RIU/PAID-SL.

Main activities

- Identify potential champion(s) for the Policy platform
- List members of PAID-SL who can participate in the platform
- Conduct a baseline to profile members of this platform
- Identify appropriate RNRRS output that are relevant/pertinent to the policy platform operations
- Identify potential themes/topics for Policy Innovation Platform
- Conduct policy review based on current issues in Agriculture and natural resources sector.
- Produce Quarterly or half-yearly Agriculture /Natural Resource Sector Policy Review Briefings

Management and Administration

The SL-RIU Country Coordinator will be responsible for the day to day activity implementation and for all strategic issues and decision-making

3. Knowledge Brokerage

Objective

- To enhance access to research based knowledge that will promote and facilitate innovative ideas

Strategy/Main activities

- Establish a suitable Desk Top/lap Top workstation in SL –RIU Secretariat
- Catalogue RNRRS outputs suitable/relevant to SL Innovation Platforms need/requirement (poultry feed, solar drying, policy, PAID-SL, KM Services)
- Solicit/enlist local research outputs pertinent to the needs of the emerging innovation platform in Sierra Leone.
- Specify KB service delivery Terms and Conditions
- Design and operate KB Services Request Forms (web-based, paper copy, in suitable newspapers, with District Directors of Agriculture, District Agriculture Committees)
- Identify potential clients (beyond the immediate PAID-SL members) MAFFS, Agric NGOs, Private Extension Agencies etc and understand their quest /preference for science/research based knowledge
- Design a Corporate Presentation of KB Services delivery
- Identify and train KB Project Officer (to be engaged for 24 hours/week contract)
- Conduct periodic (Monthly) KB Business meetings with secondary target groups – PAID-SL, Agricultural NGOs/INGOs, Research and Extension; and Educational institutions
- Receive, process and act on request for KB Services
- Write monthly progress report
- Contact Freetong Players to role play KB services, develop suitable SKIT for TV and giggle to be aired on suitable community radios
- Analyse /design most cost effective way of providing KB services
- Identify and link up external (potential) sources of science/research based knowledge suitable for Sierra Leone
- Conduct field visits to assess the uptake and utilization (adoption) of KB services provided to specifically PAID-SL members.

- Design and carry out monitoring and evaluation of KB services (perception study)

The KB, operating as an innovation platform, will pilot services to be offered to PAID members and establish ongoing market demands and requirements for service development.

In piloting and developing these services, the KB will:

- Explore alternative business models, which may include charging user fees, e.g. membership subscriptions, and commissions, and the retention of these fees; and also ancillary revenue streams such as advertising etc.
- Establish the viability of operating knowledge brokerage services in SL on a sustainable business footing through most appropriate commercial arrangements and partnerships. This may or may not involve take up and operation by one or more PAID members. This may include evolution / expansion of the service to other sectors such as health, energy, education, etc.

Certain services likely to be offered by the KB in the short-medium term:

- Physical point of presence in Sierra Leone and personnel contactable and responsive by internet, mobile, telephone, and mail
- Interactive website and related mobile/sms service with messaging, community and content management features that enable users to publish, communicate and exchange information between them.
- Mobile/sms and online 'request for information' service that is searchable/accessible by PAID members.
- Transactional ecommerce services enabling users to request, buy and sell information and services from each other accessible by internet and mobile/sms.
- Searchable online access to a large range of web-based science and development information resources relevant to agricultural innovation in Sierra Leone.
- Showcasing and promotion of PAID (and RIU SL Programme) and related key information: internationally accessible.
- Other value-adding services for PAID members and Sierra Leone Innovation System that may be identified

Technology Partnerships

There are a range of potential tools and technology partners that the Knowledge Broker will explore in order to deliver these services, for example:

- Electronic Marketplace: The MPAIS platform will be piloted during the Programme pilot period and evaluated for longer term potential

- SMS Platform: The Frontline SMS platform [<http://www.frontlinesms.com/>] is being evaluated as a low cost means to maintain contact with PAID members via text messaging
- Splash Cash Mobile Money Ltd : This new Sierra Leonean start up potentially offers a platform for use of air time transfers to pay for knowledge market services
- Village Phone: Discussions have been held with Village Tell (www.villagetell.org) about the potential to offer KB services over a new village phone network (based on the Grameen model) that is slated to commence early 2009.

Management and Administration

A project Officer will be responsible for the day to day activity implementation and report directly to National Process Facilitator/CT for all strategic issues and decision-making

Demand Support Facility

Objective

- To stimulate the demand for, uptake and utilization of research based/knowledge by especially rural actors

Strategy/Main activities

- Establish contacts with Kenema and Makeni District Councils especially the Agriculture Committees
- Review district councils plan with particular attention to Agricultural Development and Natural Resources (core activities, services and main clients)
- Conduct inventory of services /products that PAID-SL members are providing and/or could provide; identify the main clients for such services/products
- Establish and operate SL – RIU page on MPAIS
- Design and implement training and support in the formulation of specific demand for research based knowledge and related services
- Facilitate and support the use of Knowledge Broker and Innovation Finance Facility
- Facilitate membership of PAID and their effective involvement in Innovation Platforms
- Establish Public Private Partnership in Kenema and Makeni with with Infinity IT Café, KDC and PAID – SL in Kenema; Wusum Hotel, MDC and PAID-SL members in the Northern region.
- Explore access to and use of Knowledge Services by resource poor and traditionally marginalized communities in Bombali and Kenema Districts
- Study the effective of targeted subsidies to enhance effective demand for services to marginalized groups
- Explore alternative means to subsidize demand
- Explore the use of voucher based mechanism (similar to ZACSMBA) for business development services operated by the Zambia Chamber of Small and Medium Business Association
- Advance understanding of how to encourage access to and uptake of Agricultural Knowledge services
- Recruit, train, deploy and supervise DSF Project Officer to work on part-time basis

OUTLINE PROCESS

- The Demand Support Facility [DSF] and the Knowledge Broker [KB] work with PAID to develop a communications package targeted for an audience of rural service providers and their clients to publicise the knowledge broker service and how to access it.
- Local community groups contact either the DSF or the KB directly. The DSF may also proactively target groups for support.
- Selected groups are entitled to virtual credits/vouchers that can be used through the KB service; these will entitle them to make free or subsidised use of the KB and qualify for training and other support to (i) use and formulate demands through the KB service, and (ii) join and participate in PAID activities.
- KB matches demands with services available in SL. Suppliers have to join PAID to be eligible to offer services. Once registered with the KB they are kept in touch with new opportunities that meet their profile.
- The voucher service requires no transfer of cash. Where services are supplied, the KB pays the supplier directly and invoices the DSF. Mobile phone based payment services may be used.
- The DSF follows up and monitors the success of the service relationships formed.
- The DSF is free and encouraged to add to SL-RIU resources from other 'soft' development sources.

Management and Administration

A Project Officer will be responsible for the day to day activity implementation and report directly to National Process Facilitator/CT for all strategic issues and decision-making

Innovation Finance Facility

Objective

- To transform ideas into financeable /bankable investment opportunities and businesses

Strategy/Main activities

- Develop a list of financial institutions operating in Sierra Leone
- Inventory of potential financial institutions willing to operate in Sierra Leone
- Conduct in-dept analysis of bottlenecks regarding access to finance for innovative ideas
- Design strategy to package and promote innovative ideas for financing (Innovation Financing Strategy)
- Bridge the gap to bring Agricultural innovations emerging from innovation platforms onto the radar of existing financing institutions
- Develop core criteria and procedure for screening of ideas and innovation for financing
- Identify and list ad-hoc Team of External Evaluators of bankable Innovation and facilitate their participation in periodic screening (Innovation Financing Event)
- In collaboration with PAID-SL Secretariat, formulate call for Concept Note for Innovation Opportunities
- Develop /package services for innovation stakeholders to: i) understand what makes a business financeable ii) structure and develop ideas and business plans accordingly
- Establish links/acquire relevant expertise in (agricultural) finance
- Main strong working relationship with financing institutions
- Develop a credible and neutral Trade Mark as 'honest broker'
- Formulate long-term/strategic plan for IFF to operate a portfolio of investments in its own right
- Develop a pipeline of financeable opportunities arising from PAID-SL for other to take up

Design IFF to essentially as a Brokerage facility with appropriate finance model (charging prospective businesses for its services or charging financial institutions a commission fee per business opportunity).

Some Criteria for Assessing Innovation Opportunities Developed by Innovation Platforms

Clear Summary

Describe the Innovation and the Opportunity. What new products, services, or practices are proposed. How does this improve on the current situation (what constraints are addressed)? How and by who will activities be organised and with what expected outcome/result.

Team and Commitment

- Who will be the key people involved in taking this opportunity forward and how will responsibilities be allocated, including both practical roles and those involved in management and financial administration
- What experience do these people have in the roles
- What is the level of personal commitment of time and effort that these people will commit
- What personal stake will these people have in taking the opportunity forward (and how much have they to lose)

Best Use of Knowledge

- How well has the opportunity been assessed (and by what methods).
- Has the market for the relevant goods and services been evaluated; what trends are evident in the market.
- Who are the 'customers' or 'users' of the proposed innovation.
- What change in their current practices/behaviours is anticipated;
- why should people make this change?
- In operational terms how will this opportunity be taken forward
- What marketing and sales approaches will be used
- What new knowledge will be required: skills, tools and technologies and are they available and appropriate for the job.
- What is the evidence that the proposed innovation will work.
- What is the basis for this evidence (where did it come from?). How well researched.

Impact: Social & economic & environment & gender & youth

- If the opportunity is developed and taken forward successfully what changes can be expected; both to peoples livelihoods (men, women and youth), and the environment they live in (natural resources; wildlife; climate change);

- what scale of impact; who will be affected and in what way (positive and negative). How well do these changes align with local and central government policies.

Partners and Agreements (institutional arrangements)

- What agreements exist with key suppliers?
- land, people on the market side, service providers.
- What form do these agreements take?
- Do the proposers have effective title and/or rights to use the resources to be employed in the business?
- How important will it be to have community level and GoSI support for this endeavour and what is the expectation that this will be achieved.
- What arrangements and understandings do the team members have with other important stakeholders.

Business Structure

- Has consideration been given to the most appropriate legal structure for the proposed business?
- How will ownership be addressed and profits (or losses) be shared. What is the proposed management structure?

Financial elements

- What goods and services will be offered and at what prices; how much will be sold; how will revenues be collected.
- What total resources will be required to run the business: land; people, equipment, machinery, other supplies etc., and at what costs?
- Of this total, what financial investment is sought?
- Is any form of collateral or guarantee available?

More on Screening Criteria

- Overall technical feasibility based on the information available
- Fit with RNRRS or other known research outputs
- Fit with RIU values: gender, environment, poverty etc.
- Other development initiatives to promote linkages and synergies exist
- Financeability vs existing financial institutions [IFF]
- What gaps and work necessary to make the opportunity bankable, innovative, pull on research
- Ability of KM services to add this value: how and at what cost

Management and Administration

A project Officer will be responsible for the day to day activity implementation and report directly to National Process Facilitator/CT for all strategic issues and decision-making

Kick Starting – Pilot

Introduction

All the processes outlined above (and others in relation to the role of the SL-RIU Secretariat) will be piloted during the first 6 - 8 months of the programme and scaled out thereafter. The aim of the pilot is to take the entire programme through 'one cycle' of the overall process map and to capture the learning from this so that any readjustments of structures and processes can be made.

The pilot project will enable all actors: the SL RIU Country Team, PAID members and the participating District Councils, to learn by doing, and see how Innovation and learning processes will operate at the specific pilot locations. The pilot will have the following objectives:

- To explore practical functioning and operations of two initial fast tracked innovation platforms (see below)
- To map out and respond to capacity gaps in organizations/partners involved in specific innovation platform activities and at cluster level
- To field test Knowledge Market services: Innovation Finance Facility, Knowledge Brokerage and Demand Support Facility.
- To further develop and test the RIU-SL procedures and MIL axis.
- To field test and adapt selected RNRRS outputs in Sierra Leone and to document and learn from implementation of the various pilot activities.

The two selected Fast Track Innovation Platforms are:

Production and marketing of poultry feed/primary location around Kenema, Eastern Province

Background

- The chronic lack of poultry feed (high price, accessibility and affordability) in Sierra Leone was identified as a priority constraint in the original 2007 Sierra Leone Country Assessment and has since been validated as such through field work.
- This is widely considered to be a major constraint to poultry production in Sierra Leone.
 - Innovative ideas to overcome this constraint have great potential to encourage women in particular to embark on small-scale poultry production, and may also support the revitalization of poultry feed mills at strategic places in the country.
 - Kenema is home to one of the few functioning local poultry farms in the country, which is operated by MORWOMA an active PAID member.

MORWOMA is working with mainly women's groups in five different chiefdoms in Kenema district.

- In addition, the organization's work is closely linked with research work mainly conducted by Institute of Agricultural Research.

Objective

- To use research based/knowledge to establish and operate viable company for production and marketing of chicken feed.

Strategy/Main activities

In the preliminary phase, some basic preparation is required especially to establish proper procedures and determine the viability of the proposed IP

- Identify and assess potential champions for the this platform
- Identify PAID-SL members who are interested and have capacity to participate in this platform
- Identify RNRRS outputs suitable for the Chicken Feed IP
- Conducted monthly interactive sessions to build trust, confidence and mutual commitment within the IP
- Conduct awareness raising and community sensitization on Chicken Feed Production and marketing. We will have to use Freetong Players to design suitable skits and publicity/marketing information to be aired on community radios, TVs, print and electronic media.
- Assist IP members to identify, train, deploy and monitor/evaluate IP Facilitator(s)
- Conduct demand and supply (market) study of poultry feed in Kenema District (with implications for the country)
- Conduct Tour of selected Feed Mills in the country (Waterloo, Njala University, Moyamba District, Freetown, Majama Institute of Agriculture, Mr Gerald Musa's farm in Lunsar etc)
- Conduct a quick scan of the Business Environment in order to determine the ideal/most suitable locations for small-scale Feed Mills in Kenema District.
- Establish contacts with corn farmers in the Districts and in Corn Belt (Moyamba District) to participate in the platform, and determine potential for quality production of maize

After the preliminary assessment, the under-mentioned activities will be carried out as indicated:

- Make a Call for Ideas

- Establish Criteria and bring in External Evaluators (and the agreed PAID-SL) members to Screen the 'winning innovation' for continue support, particularly linking them with KM Services for relevant RNRRS outputs and for financing opportunities
- Organize maize buying and collection process
- Develop a comprehensive Business Plan through various Interactive sessions and fused training on Business Plan Development
- Determine machinery requirement for small-scale feed mills
- Determine product (Chicken Feed) quality control and packaging
- Develop a Business Name and Trade Mark and Label for company and its products
- Incorporate a joint venture /Public Private Partnership for the established Chicken Feed Company.
- Develop coaching, mentoring and advisory services for effective and efficient function of the company.

Management and administration

IP /Chicken Feed Company overseer committee will be established comprising of SL – RIU Country Team, PAID-SL Board and Resident/Operational Team in Kenema. The team will be chaired by a competent PAID member in Kenema, District Council/Agricultural Committee and competent Business Management Organization (BMO). IP Facilitator will be responsible for guidance/coaching and periodic reporting.

Solar drying as new post harvest technology in fruit value chain /primary location around Makeni, Northern Province

Background

The Northern Province is generally known for its potential for fruit production and Makeni is home to the now defunct fruit processing plant.

As also identified in the 2007 Country Assessment Report, the major constraints has been in preservation, processing and marketing, with tons of fruit regularly going to rot.

Plans are now underway to improve the main Sierra Leone - Guinea transport axis, offers a new impetus for enhancements to this value chain, including the potential for solar drying.

Such a development is also considered to have potential for youth engagement. Importantly, both of these platform areas have potential to benefit substantially and relatively quickly from existing research undertaken within the RNRRS portfolio.

Objective

- To facilitate use of research based knowledge to establish and operate solar powered drying facilities to support viable small-scale enterprises to address post harvest losses, value addition, packaging and marketing of agricultural commodities.

Strategy/Main activities

In the preliminary phase, some basic preparation is required especially to establish proper procedures and determine the viability of the proposed IP

- Identify and assess potential champions for the this platform
- Identify PAID-SL members who are interested and have capacity to participate in this platform
- Identify RNRRS outputs suitable for the Chicken Feed IP
- Conducted monthly interactive sessions to build trust, confidence and mutual commitment within the IP
- Conduct awareness raising and community sensitization on solar powered drying, farm product/perishable crop packaging and marketing. We will use Freetong Players to design suitable skits and publicity/marketing information to be aired on community radios, TVs, print and electronic media.
- Assist IP members to identify, train, deploy and monitor/evaluate IP Facilitator(s)
- Conduct demand and supply (market) study for the application of solar powered drying in Bombali District (with implications for the country)
- Conduct Tour of selected farm product solar powered drying/farm product processing, packaging and marketing facilities in the country.

- Conduct a quick scan of the Business Environment in order to determine the ideal/most suitable locations for small-scale solar powered drying facilities in Bombali District.
- Establish contacts with potential farmers/producer groups in the Districts to participate in the platform, and determine potential for quality production of maize

After the preliminary assessment, the under-mentioned activities will be carried out as indicated:

- Make a Call for Ideas
- Establish Criteria and bring in External Evaluators (and the agreed PAID-SL members to Screen the 'winning innovation' for continue support, particularly linking them with KM Services for relevant RNRRS outputs and for financing opportunities
- Organize maize buying and collection process
- Develop a comprehensive Business Plan through various Interactive sessions and fused training on Business Plan Development
- Determine machinery requirement for small-scale feed mills
- Determine product (Chicken Feed) quality control and packaging
- Develop a Business Name and Trade Mark and Label for company and its products
- Incorporate a joint venture /Public Private Partnership for the established Chicken Feed Company.
- Develop coaching, mentoring and advisory services for effective and efficient function of the company.

Management and administration

IP /Solar Drying Company overseer committee will be established comprising of SL – RIU Country Team, PAID-SL Board and Resident/Operational Team in Makeni. The team will be chaired by a competent PAID member in Makeni, District Council/Agricultural Committee and competent Business Management Organization (BMO). IP Facilitator will be responsible for guidance/coaching and periodic reporting.

Annex on Policy Platform

At the recent 11th/12th November 2008 PAID workshop it was formally agreed that a Policy Platform should be formed. Initial discussions on the role of the Platform emphasised the following functions:

- ensure that policies exist for the operation of PAID-SL
- play advocacy role to influence government policy
- influence the formulation of policies to help the innovation programme
- nationwide advocacy for PAID-SL

In the workshop discussions (to be covered in more detail in the workshop write up) there was some degree of consensus that land policy was one key area for attention; also agricultural finance and more generally the enabling environment for agricultural marketing and export.

One area of concern was the extent to which policies on paper translate to implementation. Other key cross-cutting issues related to gender, including woman as community stakeholders, and traditional norms that disadvantage them; also Youth, their marginalisation, rural-urban migration, unemployment.

Some specific recommendations for advocacy related to:

- woman's ownership of land and gender balance within membership of farmers groups; also the design and implementation of woman friendly farmer activities (such as vegetable cultivation, marketing, processing etc.).
- Duty free concessions on agricultural equipment.

There were felt to be good opportunities for influencing policy relating to innovation opportunities via :

- Forming stakeholder pressure groups including both researchers and farmers
- Effective links with the ministry, and with district councillors and parliamentarians
- Sensitisation and advocacy

Several of the PAID members are already involved in or influencers of agriculture and NR policy formulation (three members of Parliament participated in the most recent workshop, as did at least one District Councillor, the Head of the National Farmers Association, the National Extension Coordinator, the Director University Research and Development Services and others key actors). The Policy Platform will provide a new 'space' within which these actors and other members can focus on dimensions of policy that require both more evidence and more advocacy in the Sierra Leone context. As a 'partnership of service providers' the PAID has the opportunity to generate and bring to the table valuable insights into the public-private interface and how government, the (currently overactive) NGO community, and other key national umbrella bodies such as the NAFSL can effectively 'stand back' and support/enable the fledgling but essential community of rural entrepreneurs.

The platform will effectively be operating as a 'self-interested' lobby to influence and advocate for changes that will improve the position and performance of service and business-oriented agencies and SMEs within the new agribusiness-oriented agriculture strategy. The platform has a ready-made vehicle to bring these perspectives into the formal policy process in Sierra Leone through the Agricultural Advisory and Technical Committees of the reformed MAFFS.

Specific modes of operation for this platform will be fleshed out during the Programme pilot phase with the advice and support of the RIU Senior Advisor for Policy & Partnerships, Kerry Albright. There is a considerable amount of existing research-based knowledge to draw on, for example as summarised in RIU Practice Note no 9 "Lessons for out-scaling and up-scaling" (RIU 2006).