

Partnership Facility Final Report

Contribution to Global Leadership in KFD

1. Strategic Theme (Goal)

Knowledge for Development – Global partnerships

2. Project Manager

Elizabeth Dodsworth

3. Period of Project

January to December 2007

4. Budget Total

£20,000

5. Project Code

DF60007

1. Executive Summary

CABI has been invited to participate in a range of international initiatives, each of which aims to improve the accessibility and quality of agricultural information available to researchers and students in developing countries. In each case CABI has brought to the situation a dual perspective – of publisher/information manager and of development organization. Few organizations are able to contribute in this way and CABI's involvement is much appreciated by those concerned in the development of these projects and programmes.

2. Project Background

Strengthening agricultural systems in poor countries has been shown to be very effective in impacting positively on economic growth. Knowledge management approaches, enabled by information and communication technologies, are important in ensuring dissemination, access and use of research information. Understanding what research has been done at global, regional, national and institutional levels provides the basis for developing new programmes and interventions, based on evidence, that impact positively on poverty indicators. Access to broad coverage of the research literature in a field is essential to the development and implementation of effective research programmes. Without such access there is a real danger of carrying out work based on false premises, or of repeating work that has already been done elsewhere.

Access to the corpus of current world research literature has been patchy at best for developing country scientists mainly because of the cost of purchasing such literature from northern publishers. The digital information revolution has made broad access to research

programmes and outputs possible in different ways and a range of global partnerships have been initiated in this new digital context to enable such access for developing country scientists and students.

3. Project Purpose

CABI has been invited to participate in several key international developments in this arena and the use of PF funds has enabled the continuation of this involvement. The AGORA-HINARI-OARE (HINAGOA), TEEAL, FAO (e-Agriculture and CIARD), FARA-RAILS, CTA and CGIAR (GO-FAU) initiatives are all proving to be fertile in their creation of information systems developing open access to valuable agricultural, medical and environmental research information. CABI is welcomed to these initiatives both as a content and tools provider and as a strategic partner helping to guide the direction of the partnerships and the resultant services.

4. Brief description/outline of the Project activities, and/or methodologies

A member of CABI staff from the UK participated in a 3-day workshop at the FARA HQ in Accra, Ghana in January 2007. The purpose of the workshop was to further develop the concept of the FARA-RAILS (Regional Agricultural Information and Learning System) information platform – to be created and managed as an African information system. A range of Northern and African partners make up the RAILS Task Force and are working to develop this platform. CABI's role is to bring in-depth experience of international best practice in information management to the development of the concept. CABI also brings influence through articulating its' Member Country needs and ensuring that the platform will be demand rather than supply driven. CABI is now in discussion with FARA concerning areas of information and communication development which the organizations can take forward together.

CABI was able to participate, on invitation, in a 3-day AGRISContent workshop at CTA in Wageningen, The Netherlands in March 2007. This was one in a sequence of workshops, with FAO taking a lead role, bringing together international partners who are active in the development of agricultural information services for development. The outputs from this meeting formed a part of the 2nd Expert Consultation on International Information Systems for Agricultural Science and Technology (IISAST) held at FAO during the eAgriculture week in late September, which CABI also participated in on invitation. This was an important meeting for a broad range of over 50 partners representing national and regional agricultural systems and international agricultural information management specialists. The workshop enabled contribution to the strategic and technical direction of FAO's work in managing agricultural knowledge in and for developing countries. Further, it helps CABI to position itself strategically alongside FAO so that areas of complementary interest may be developed for the future.

CABI sponsored the attendance of Dr Theo Mlaki, Director of Information and Documentation, Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology at a conference in Oxford, UK, *Alternative Energy, Health and the Environment: Africa Now!*. He presented a paper on *Reduction of poverty through knowledge*. Dennis Rangi, Executive Director, International Development, CABI also presented a paper.

In July CABI attended the annual Partners Meeting of the HINARI-AGORA-OARE programme in Washington DC. This is the pivotal annual meeting where the strategic and management direction of the programme is addressed and actions agreed into a 3 year time frame. CABI's presence as both publisher and development organization is valued in this programme. CABI was also able to join a follow-up Technical Meeting in December in London where the major Partners met staff from Microsoft who are now charged with developing the technical access framework for the Programme.

In November CABI was invited to attend a 2-day workshop in Washington DC, hosted by the CGIAR, to develop the GO-FAU concept with officers from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. GO-FAU will be an openly accessible training resource for students of the agricultural sciences in developing countries. CABI was invited as the only non-CGIAR content provider in the workshop.

Also in November CABI was invited to participate in the CTA Smart Toolkit technical consultation aimed at further developing the Toolkit. The Toolkit is a collection of tools, made freely available, for evaluating information products and services and is becoming widely used by developing country information specialists.

Finally, CABI attended the Research Communication Steering Group meeting in London in December. The RCSG is an initiative catalysed by DFID to gather together like-minded communication for development (C4D) organizations to address how to map together different areas of strength to take forward new initiatives in a coherent way.

5. Statement of the project outputs/achievements

Transforming research knowledge into action that enhances livelihoods and reduces poverty is a complex process and depends upon many factors. However, the provision of and access to networks of current research information is essential to the long term economic health of nations and regions. CABI has contributed as a partner in these networks and is respected for its skills and assets in these activities.

All of these Global Partnership initiatives operate in areas where CABI has strengths derived from its existence both as a publishing/information manager and as a development organization. Each initiative is working to make agricultural research and educational information more accessible and more useable for developing country stakeholders. In each case CABI was invited to participate and was able to contribute in a way that has helped the initiatives to move forward and to become more effective.

6. Project Beneficiaries (immediate and longer term)

Transforming research knowledge into action that enhances livelihoods and reduces poverty is a complex process. These projects all operate at the level of providing content and/or information management skills to developing country librarians, researchers or information professionals and students. The provision of and access to networks of current research and educational information is essential to the long term economic health of nations and regions. CABI has contributed as a partner in these networks and is respected for its skills and assets in these activities.

7. Contributions to CABI Partnership Facility Goals and subsequent Programmes/Actions

CABI's involvement in this range of initiatives has, in each case, enabled an important contribution to be made to the development of some very large projects and programmes. The aim of all these initiatives is ultimately to improve the agricultural knowledge-base and hence the wealth of developing countries.

8. Dissemination of Results

Each initiative has a responsibility for the communication of outputs from its meetings.