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Learning from institutional innovations – India node: Suite 2 uptake promotion

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Annex A: Electronic compilation of Products

- 1. *Partnering for Impact: Learning from Agricultural R&D in India***
- 2. *Encouraging Effective R&D Partnerships: Lessons Learned from the Indian Experience***
- 3. *Learning from Institutional change: Preliminary feedback for NAIP***
- 4. *SHG Guidelines***
- 5. *LEISA Article***
- 6. *DFID India Case Study / Success Story based on R7830 and R7839***

Annex B: PD assignment Trip Reports

Annex C: Guidance Materials for participants of workshop to be held at the NASC Complex New Delhi, 7-10th Nov 2005

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CEO	Chief executive officer
CGIAR	Consultative group on International Agricultural research
CIAT	International Centre for Tropical Agriculture
CPSL	Centre for Promotion of Sustainable Livelihoods
DDG	Deputy Director General
DFID	UK Department for International Development
FTR	Final technical report
ICAR	Indian Council for Agricultural Research
ILAC	CGIAR Institutional Learning and Change Initiative
IISS	Indian Institute of Soil Science
IRCER	ICAR Research Complex for the Eastern Region
LEISA	Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture
NAIP	National Agricultural Innovation Project
NARS	National Agricultural Research System
NATP	National Agricultural Technology Project
NCAP	ICAR National Centre for Agricultural Economics and Policy Research
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NRSP	DFID Natural Resource Systems Programme
PACS	DFID (India) Programme: Poorest Areas of Civil Society
R&D	Research and development
S&T	Science and technology
SHG	Self Help Group
SLPS	Sustainable Livelihood Promotion Society
WB	World Bank

1. Executive Summary

Through its funding for a suite of research in India the DFID Natural Resource Systems Programme (NRSP) together with its partner the Natural Resources Management Division of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR NRM), have supported research that seeks to generate new knowledge of effective strategies for the delivery of rural services and for the implementation of local arrangements to improve livelihoods through agriculturally based activities in the high potential irrigated production systems of the Indo Gangetic Plains.

NRSP projects R7830 and R7839, which represent the key research effort in this suite, tested a non-deterministic community development approach to stimulate expression of demand for services by the poor and socially disadvantaged (including women) in the project sites. These services included knowledge exchange and provision of support for technology assessment and adaptation.

The projects, which involved innovative partnerships and ways of working, were recognised by ICAR NRM and staff of the ICAR National Centre for Agricultural Policy (NCAP) as representing an example of a new model for development research.

The purpose of this PD assignment (PD140) was to validate the findings and lessons learnt from the implementation of innovative interdisciplinary research projects, including R7830 and R7839 and to promote these in a user friendly format, highlighting the findings and implications for project design.

A phased workshop was undertaken. A group of research and development practitioners (drawn across four projects identified as innovative) undertook a detailed analysis of their experiences using innovation histories and actor network matrices, to identify the key partnering principles, lessons learnt and the benefits of working in partnership. These findings were further validated by participants in the second phase of the workshop and implications for policy makers and senior research managers of lessons learnt and experiences of practitioners were derived.

Participants identified a number of measurable benefits of adopting partnership approaches. Based on their experiences, a number of factors where both policy and research management practice need to change in order to enable wider adoption of partnership approaches were identified. A policy brief that highlights these was prepared for senior research managers and policymakers. The ICAR National Centre for Agricultural Economics and Policy Research will promote these findings as an NCAP policy brief.

The experiences of workshop participants were drawn together as a short document designed to assist research and development professionals as they develop partnerships. This resource is to be distributed to research and development practitioners both through the National Agricultural Innovations Project (NAIP) and the ICAR NRM Directorate.

The workshop method itself was judged as innovative by both participants and facilitators and an article describing the lessons learnt was submitted for publication.

Recognising that an important audience of development practitioners exists for practical guidance on the non-deterministic approach used for community development this PD assignment worked with former R7839 project staff and a Delhi based publisher to revise a prototype product that the project had developed for publication.

2. Background

In 1997 DFID NRSP undertook a process of consultation with an international group of researchers and stakeholders including representatives from ICAR and regional research organisations through DFID NRSP projects R7000 and R7001 and associated workshops held in the UK. The workshops framed the challenges facing high potential systems, highlighting the 'gap' between current production levels and the potential levels of production for specific locations. Following the UK workshops NRSP supported the ICAR national workshop on 'Long-term soil fertility management through integrated plant nutrient supply. IISS, Bhopal, 1-4 April 1998 held by ICAR at the Centre for Soil Science, Bhopal. This workshop identified the lack of adoption of research products and technologies by intended users as an important factor in the failure to achieve expected levels of production. Further it drew attention to the need for biophysical, social and institutional options for enhanced nutrient management. Project R7458 confirmed the findings of the Bhopal workshop highlighted that development interventions had so far focused on technical interventions and that greater emphasis was needed on institutional possibilities.

DFID NRSP Project R7600, which was undertaken in Bangladesh in 2000, identified issues of communication, and service delivery more widely, as important factors that affected uptake of technologies.

Recognising that the answer to the questions posed above lay in how research and other services are delivered, the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) Natural Resources Management Directorate worked with the DFID NRSP to develop research that went beyond traditional production-based research. Sister project DFID NRSP projects R7830 and R7839 were undertaken between 2000 and 2004 based in Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Their research was designed to generate new knowledge of effective strategies for delivery of rural services and for the implementation of local arrangements to improve livelihoods through agriculturally based activities.

R7830 explored the implications and opportunity for integrated management of land and water resources for enhancing productivity while R7839 sought to develop sustainable and scaleable institutional arrangements at the community level that would facilitate livelihood improvement for the poor and marginalised.

Together projects R7830 and R7839 tested an institutional approach to enhance social capital at a community level and build individual financial and human capital. The approach stimulates expression of demand for agricultural services by the target group, including greater equity in knowledge exchange and pro-active participation in technology assessment and adaptation.

In moving away from the production-based norm, the research generated new knowledge of effective strategies for delivery of rural services and for the implementation of local arrangements to improve livelihoods through agriculturally-based activities.

The projects developed a non-deterministic "dialectic" approach that encourages self-examination by communities, reference to external experiences and information, review of available resources, capacities and opportunities, challenging of assumptions held by various stakeholders, and repeated re-examination of these elements. Significant uptake of these research products has already been achieved and reported by the projects. The projects have also reported that this approach is extremely effective at reaching and delivering benefits to the poor and socially disadvantaged.

The projects were also recognised by the ICAR NRM directorate and staff of the ICAR National Centre for Agricultural Policy as representing an example of a new model for research for development. The projects themselves involved innovative partnerships and ways of working. These innovative research approaches were important in enabling the project to deliver the findings and products summarised above.

During the R7830 and R7839 project's workshop¹ Dr JS Samra (DDG NRM) indicated the need to validate these findings more widely. The purpose of the current PD assignment was to undertake the validation signalled above and to promote the lessons learnt in a user friendly format, highlighting the findings and implications for project design.

To enable effective engagement with, and analysis of these experiences, a workshop was proposed to create an arena where an appropriate community of practitioners could present and analyze their experience and consider the wider implications for interdisciplinary, multi-partner research projects. Resource materials and policy briefs produced as products of the workshop will be widely promoted ensuring that the lessons learnt inform researchers, research managers and donors.

This activity is extremely timely because ICAR are currently working with staff from the World Bank to develop the National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP). This project, which follows on from the National Agricultural Technology Project (NATP), is supporting a process of organisational change within ICAR. It is expected that the research will be undertaken through consortia and other partnerships including ICAR scientists, private sector and NGO partners as well as international researchers.

¹ "Realising Potential: Livelihoods, Poverty and Governance, 2-3 August 2004 New Delhi

3. Purpose

The purpose of this PD assignment was to validate and promote the uptake of findings and lessons learnt from the implementation of innovative interdisciplinary research projects, including R7830 and R7839. The findings have been documented as communication products targeted at differentiated audience consisting of practitioners, policymakers and donors in the India node.

The priority target audience is ICAR both at the researcher and senior management level with the aim of influencing the development of the nascent National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP). Involvement of CGIAR Institution Learning and Change (ILAC) ensures that the lessons drawn and conclusions have broader, global utility.

4. Products

The PD assignment produced 6 products in addition to a final report. These are provided in electronic format as Annex A. The following describes the products.

1. *Partnering for Impact: Learning from Agricultural R&D in India*

GYA and ICAR-RCER, 2006. *Partnering for Impact: Learning from Institutional Change in Indian Agricultural R&D*. GY Associates Ltd, UK and Indian Council of Agricultural Research – Research Complex for the eastern region, India. 24 pp.

Professionally written resource materials targeted at development research practitioners that draws on the analysis of case studies undertaken during the workshop “Learning from Institutional Change” to derive lessons learnt and implications for those developing research partnerships to undertake interdisciplinary, livelihood focussed research.

Approx. 1000 hard copies were distributed in India and electronic formats were made available. They were mailed to workshop participants, ICAR Digs, the directors of ICAR Research Institutes and Chancellors of State Agricultural Universities. The key distribution and promotion channels are through the NAIP programme management office, the NAIP help desk and IRCER.

2. *Encouraging Effective R&D Partnerships: Lessons Learned from the Indian Experience*

GYA and ICAR-RCER, 2006. *Encouraging Effective R&D Partnerships: Lessons Learned from the Indian Experience*. 4 pp.

A professionally written policy brief to inform / influence donors (NAIP WB, ICAR, DFID and CGIAR Science council and systems office) of the experience and implications for research management of partnership research models, drawing on case study experiences in India.

Approximately 1000 copies of the brief were distributed in India, in both paper and electronic formats. The report was mailed to workshop participants, ICAR Digs, the directors of ICAR Research Institutes and Chancellors of State Agricultural Universities. The key distribution and promotion channels are through the NAIP programme management office, the NAIP help desk and IRCER.

3. *Learning from Institutional change: Preliminary feedback for NAIP*

A briefing document prepared immediately post workshop at the request of Dr Mruthunjaya, National director NATP / NAIP for ICAR and World Bank staff.

4. *SHG Guidelines*

The guidelines Self help Group (SHG) facilitation developed by R7839 take the form of a narrative, written in Hindi, tracing the process of from an agency’s initial ‘unspectacular entry’ into a rural community, through the recruitment of village ‘volunteers’ and promotion of groups, to the stage at which groups ‘mature’ and the volunteers realise an income from brokering services to their groups.

To be published and distributed by Vani Prakashan, New Delhi. Of the initial print run of 1000 copies 250 were provided to CPSL and the remaining copies will be sold through Vani Publishing. CPSL retain ownership of the copyright and page proofs.

5. *LEISA Article*

Douthwaite, B., Sikka, A., Sulaiman, R., Best, J. and Gaunt, J. 2006. Learning with innovation histories. LEISA magazine, 22: 42-43.

This article describes the use of the innovation history methodology during the workshop and lessons learnt. The magazine can be accessed at <http://www.leisa.info/>.

6. DFID India Case Study / Success Story based on R7830 and R7839

A 500 word piece outlining institutional innovations within R7830 and R7839 and their potential implications for other research-for-development projects, prepared using template provided by DFID India and to be made available on the DFID India Web Site. A copy of the draft submitted to DFID Dec 2005 is provided (Annex A: DFID India case study.PDF). This remains under review.

5. PD assignment Approach

Inception phase

As described above a workshop was envisaged as to creating an arena where an appropriate community of practitioners could present and analyze their experience and consider the wider implications for interdisciplinary, multi-partner research projects.

Given the importance of engagement with the intended audience and users of the PD assignment products John Gaunt visited Delhi in July 2005 (Annex B) to meet with Dr JS Samra DDG-NRM, Dr R Chand acting direction NCAP and Dr Mruthunjaya Director NATP / NAIP. The purpose of the visit was to confirm of their interest in the proposed products and to enable their contribution to the planning for the implementation of the PD assignment and design of the products.

The visit also provided an opportunity to work together with Dr R Sulaiman and Dr AK Sikka on the detailed planning for the PD assignment and design for the workshop.

Dr Samra voiced his concern that a conventional workshop format would not encourage engagement with policy issues and our intended policy audience. Further, he suggested that, given the important policy implications of the work, we should consider workshop formats that would enable us to engage effectively with policy issues. This suggestion led to the development of innovative workshop format trailed by this PD assignment.

Our meetings with Dr R Chand confirmed the support of NCAP for this venture and led to the suggestion that we consider producing our Policy Brief as one of the NCAP Policy Brief series². Both Dr Chand and R Sulaiman felt that the subject material built well upon themes that had already been addressed in previous NCAP Policy Briefs. This meant that we could reach a pre-identified audience that is receptive to the subject matter. Practically the offer enabled us to utilise the mailing list and distribution network established by NCAP.

Preliminary meetings with Dr Mruthunjaya established a direct relationship with NAIP. Dr Mruthunjaya indicated that support for partnerships (called consortia) would be central to NAIP. Further, although plans for NAIP were still fluid, he anticipated that the resource materials we planned might be of value in providing support for groups as they develop partnerships.

Write Arm were contracted to handle logistics and workshop facilitation and the availability NASC venue was confirmed for the workshop. Green Ink, a professional company providing publishing services to support rural research and development was contracted to produce the *policy brief* and *resource materials* to be produced as outputs of the PD assignment.

During the inception phase an important unanticipated opportunity arose. Project R7839 had produced a manual for SHG formation when it became clear that (a) it was becoming possible to codify the process of SHG formation and support based on the experience in Bihar, and (b) the distance of the Maharajganj project site from Bihar meant that volunteers and others in Maharajganj were needing to work independently of those who had conceived the model (and who were based at Patna).

An English language version of the manual was criticised in the FTR review of R7839 as

² <http://www.ncap.res.in/> Validated 29th December 2005.

seeming to mix the purposes of a manual with that of an analysis of the achievements of the SHG process and the SHGs themselves. However, former project staff of R7839 now operating an NGO Centre for Promotion of Sustainable Livelihoods (CPSL) had revised and re-written the manual in Hindi hereinafter referred to as *SHG Guidelines* to distinguish it from the earlier manual. The guidelines still use a narrative, tracing the process of SHG facilitation from an agency's initial 'unspectacular entry' into a rural community, through the recruitment of village 'volunteers' and promotion of groups, to the stage at which groups 'mature' and the volunteers realise an income from brokering services to their groups. The guidelines had already been used in association with training carried out for a number of organisations³ and 200 copies of the manual (in photocopied / staple-bound form), had been sold mainly to training clients (including 60 copies to NABARD).

A very well-reputed Hindi-language publishing house⁴ had also shown an interest in the draft. Largely through the intermediation of Sanjay Kumar, Secretary / CEO of Deshkal (a social activist organisation working particularly with Dalit communities) who had come into contact with Sunil Chaudhary (Secretary of CPSL) via the DFID Poorest Areas in Civil Society (PACS)⁵ project.

Sanjay Kumar had reported that he had found the guidelines engaging, particularly the way they presented a set of 'how-to' guidelines as a narrative. He describes the manual as "well-crafted, and as occupying a unique slot in the available literature: there is nothing of its kind about SHGs available in spite of SHGs being so widespread".

Given this feedback we proposed to NRSP that the scope of this PD assignment could be expanded to include the preparation of the guidelines for publication. This was agreed and the PD assignment modified in October 2005.

Implementation

The following sections briefly describe the approach taken in implementing the PD assignment. We outline separately the approach taken for the development of the resource materials and policy brief and the process of developing the SHG Guidelines.

The resource materials and policy brief draw upon the analysis by Indian research and development practitioners of experiences across "case study" projects (outlined in Annex A: Partnering for impact.PDF) and programmes identified as representing innovative partnership arrangements. The case studies comprised partnerships with differing institutional arrangements. The focus of the case studies was natural resource based. Two case studies were based on watershed projects in rainfed areas and two were high potential irrigated rice-based production systems on the Indo-Gangetic Plains.

The workshop was conceived as a 'workshop within a workshop,' meaning that it had distinct phases, the outputs from which fed into and served as the resource materials of the next phase. The workshop approach was designed by the facilitation team of John Gaunt (GY Associates Ltd), Alok Sikka (IRCER), Rasheed Sulaiman (NCAP), Boru Douthwaite (CIAT) and John Best (Reading University) with support also from Doug Horton (ILAC).

We drew on the experience of Boru Douthwaite using "Learning-Orientated Evaluation

³ These include NABARD, the Xavier Institute of Social Services, Rangpur and several State-level organisations associated with the National Literacy Programme.

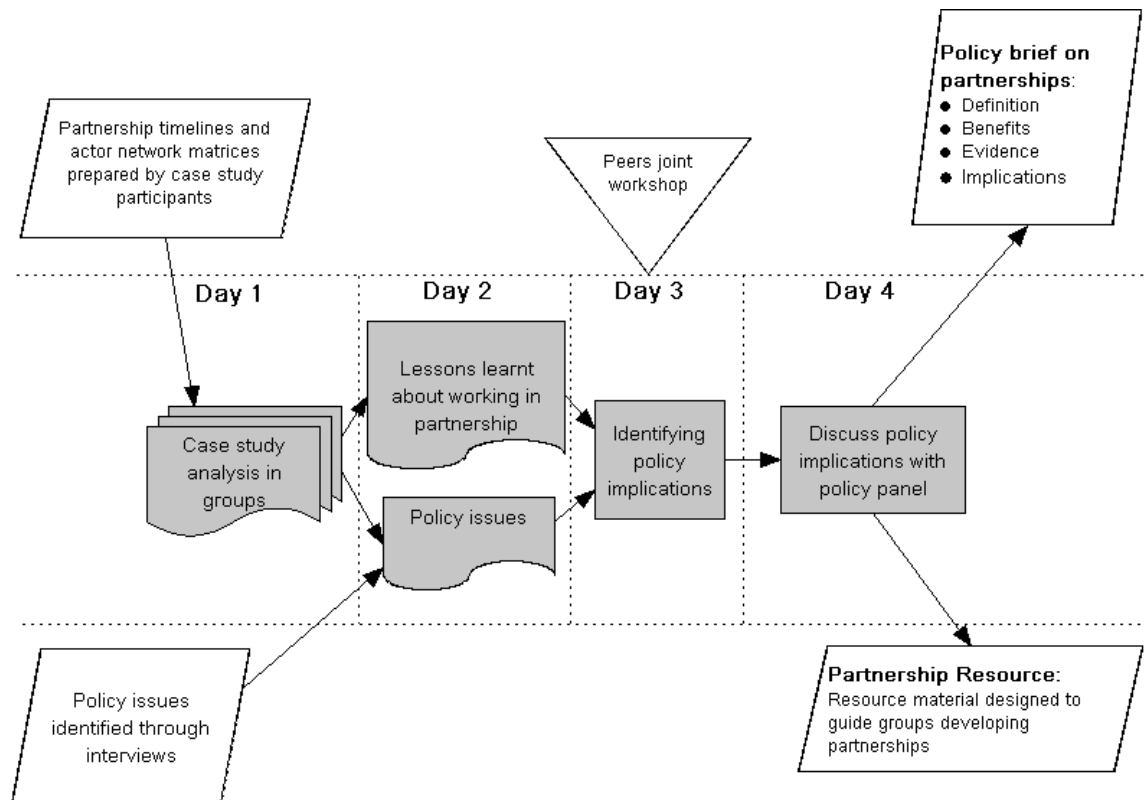
⁴ Vani Prakashan, New Delhi.

⁵ <http://www.empowerpoor.org/> Verified 30th December 2005

Approaches” to develop the format for the analysis of the workshop⁶. We used two tools: 1) the ‘innovation timeline’ sequentially lists the key events in the history of the innovation; and, 2) ‘actor network analysis’ which identifies the key links between the stakeholders involved in the innovation process.

The format for the workshop and how this contributed to the development of the policy brief and partnering resource is shown below (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Format of workshop Learning from Institutional Change



The analysis of the innovation histories during the workshop was based on documentation prepared by case study participants prior to the workshop. Backstopping support prior to the workshop was provided by the workshop facilitation team.

Policy makers and senior research managers were interviewed by NCAP staff to document their questions and insights with respect to partnership in the context of NRM research and development. Follow up courtesy visits were made during a second visit to India by John Gaunt (September 2005). Those interviewed were invited to join the workshop policy panel.

The resulting policy paper (Annex C: p10-17) was provided to all participants prior to the workshop in electronic form and as hard copy in their workshop pack.

The workshop “Learning for Institutional Change” was held at the National Agricultural Science Complex, New Delhi, 7-10th November 2005. The initial two days of the workshop comprised preparatory activities involving representatives from each of the case study partnerships. They analysed the case studies in detail, gleaning information that then served

⁶ <http://www.cgiar-ilac.org/downloads/Brief5Proof2.pdf> Verified 29th December 2005.

as resource materials for the second stage of the meeting.

The analysis undertaken on days 1-2 drew upon the innovation histories and actor network matrices, to identify what participants regarded as the key partnering principles, and lessons learnt. Participants next identified the benefits of working in partnership and how these benefits could be measured. Participants in the initial two days became resource people for the third day. Presentations were prepared by participants to describe each case study and summarising the findings of the analysis on days 1 and 2.

Participants in the 'main workshop' on day three were representative of the target audience for the resource materials being generated from the workshop – NRM researchers and development professionals. The format of the main workshop was highly interactive and led to the preparation of materials for presentation and discussion in a final 'policy plenary discussion' on day four of the meeting.

On the final day a panel comprising senior and mid-level policy makers who had contributed to the policy paper joined the workshop to respond to the findings of participants and discuss the policy implications.

As indicated above (Figure 1) we drew upon the analysis by workshop participants to prepare both a policy brief⁷ with senior research managers and policymakers as the intended audience and a partnership resource⁸ designed for research practitioners.

The writer commissioned through Green Ink to undertake this task was present during the workshop and drew on the materials produced by workshop participants, feedback from interviews during the workshop and literature research to prepare the products.

Given the innovative format of the workshop we also sought feedback from participants throughout the workshop. We reflected on how the workshop was progressing through a barometer group meeting after day 1 (facilitators and three resource person volunteers), an after-action review carried out by the facilitators on day 3, and an end-of-workshop evaluation at the end of day 4.

This feedback and reflections on the workshop method are further explored below and are reported in a paper submitted for publication (Annex A: LEISA_March 2006.PDF)

Development of SHG Guidelines

A member of the PD assignment facilitation team (John Best) visited Patna (October 2005) to provide support to the CPSL team as they conceptualised the revised product and negotiated an appropriate arrangement for publication. The details of these interactions are provided in the trip reports (Appendix 2).

Existing users and potential users were consulted to determine the potential for revisions of the guidelines. This consultation took the form of i) a series of meetings within the CPSL team to reflect on experiences, ii) discussions between CPSL staff and members of the SLPSs (i.e. volunteer groups), and other organisations representing important categories of target users of the *Guidelines*, iii) existing users of the guidelines. In all some 70 people were

⁷ GYA and ICAR-RCER, 2006. Encouraging Effective R&D Partnerships: Lessons Learned from the Indian Experience. 4 pp.

⁸ GYA and ICAR-RCER, 2006. Partnering for Impact: Learning from Institutional Change in Indian Agricultural R&D. GY Associates Ltd, UK and Indian Council of Agricultural Research – Research Complex for the eastern region, India. 24 pp.

consulted.

6. Findings

Here we report on the findings of the interviews with policy makers and senior research managers (*Policy perspectives*), the findings of the analysis of case studies by workshop participants (*Workshop method*), the success of the new workshop method (*Workshop approach*) and consultations undertaken on the *Guidelines (Feedback on SHG guidelines)*.

6.1 Policy perspectives

The findings of the interviews with key policy makers with interests in NRM research and implementation are summarised below and reported (Annex C: p10-17):

- Separate Government organizations are responsible for research and implementation of NRM programmes in India.
- Implementation guidelines and norms vary from Ministry to Ministry and this has led to overlap and inefficiencies in programme implementation at the district and block levels.
- Inter-agency co-ordination in implementation of NRM projects continues to remain weak, despite the development of guidelines for promoting co-ordination and convergence.
- Despite increasing evidence on the value of partnerships in NRM research, very few research projects have partnered with the state line departments, NGOs, community based organisations, farmer groups and the private sector in the design and implementation or research projects.
- Though NRM is a complex task that needs quality technical expertise, the need for science and technology (S&T) expertise is not sufficiently articulated at the policy and implementation levels.
- Existing partnership experiences from NRM projects need detailed analysis to draw wider lessons to inform NRM practice and policy.

Based on interviews with mid and senior level policy makers and senior research managers the following policy questions were identified from NRM research and implementation perspectives respectively:

Policy questions from a Research perspective:

1. *What are the benefits of the partnership approach?*
 - a. Do they add value to the way technologies are currently developed through disciplinary research, typically at the research stations?
 - b. Do partnership approaches lead to more effective use scientific and technical skills in a development context?
2. *Do we have generalisable evidence to show that partnership approaches i) improve the process of technology development and adoption and ii) that these lead to sustainable resource use and poverty impacts?*
 - a. What changes in research policy are required to motivate scientists and research centres to work in partnership mode?
 - b. Does increase in number of partners push the costs up? If so, are the benefits commensurate with cost increase?
3. *What are the implications of moving to a partnership approach?*
 - a. How to select the appropriate partners?

- b. What are the kind of skills to look for among partners
- c. At what stages partners have to be involved in the research process (identification of problem, project proposal development, testing of results, up-scaling or at all stages)
- d. What kinds of flexibility have to be provided in project design while developing partnership projects?
- e. Does project development in partnership mode need facilitation (a pre-project phase)?
- f. What mechanisms are required to facilitate consensus and reduce conflict of interests?
- g. Would involvement of NRM researcher in the implementation of development projects distract from their interest in developing technologies or does it provide a learning opportunity for researchers to test and adapt their technologies, use their scientific knowledge to solve field problems and promote technology uptake?
- h. Has partnership experiences led to changes in institutions (rules, ways of doing things, habits, practices) within the partner organization?

Policy questions from an Implementation perspective:

1. *Do partnerships with science and technology (S & T) organisations really add value to the way NRM interventions are designed, implemented and evaluated?*
 - a. Are the S & T organisations genuinely interested in partnering in NRM implementation? If so, why such partnerships are few in number?
 - b. What mechanisms have to be put in place to facilitate more active engagement of S&T organisations in NRM interventions?
 - c. How to improve the technical expertise of line departments on NRM aspects?
 - d. How to address the weak capacity for designing and implementing NRM projects at the district, block and village levels?
 - Does the development of specific guidelines relevant at these levels really help?
 - Can training of field staff compensate for lack of quality expertise in designing NRM interventions?
 - Would earmarking separate allocation of funds for purchasing technical expertise from S&T organisations ensure their participation in NRM projects?
 - e. Regulating costs of watershed programmes is currently a matter of concern: will adding a research partner increase the operational costs?
 - f. Successful examples of partnerships are more evident in donor (in the Indian context, it means external donor like World Bank, DFID, DANIDA etc, etc) funded projects. Why is it so? What are the enabling factors behind this?
2. *How can we be sure that the partnership approach is sustainable and scalable?*
 - a. Many interventions claimed as successful during implementation fail when external funding is withdrawn. Apart from sustaining people's participation, there is also a need to sustain the technical backstopping. How to do this?
 - b. Many of the successful examples are difficult to scale up. We need to understand the reasons. But then how to promote more successful cases?

6.2 Workshop findings

Analysis of the case studies projects by workshop participants highlighted some of the key benefits of the partnership approach. These included enhanced synergy and creativity; greater sustainability over time; increased empowerment and capacity building among partners; improved cost-effectiveness; wider sharing of information and more rapid scaling up of useful interventions; and positive changes in organisational behaviour and processes, including greater transparency and a more participatory approach to planning, priority setting and decision making in general. The benefits identified by participants of adopting a

partnership approach and potential indicators are summarised (Table 1).

Table 1. Benefits of partnerships and potential indicators of performance identified by workshop participants

Benefits of partnership	Indicators
More sustainable over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continued acceptance of project interventions in the face of shocks ● Institutionalisation of relationships once the initial project is completed ● Changing composition of the partnership allowing it to adapt to changing circumstances
Enhanced synergy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduction in time needed for solving problems and for scaling up
Greater creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Innovative problem solving is seen among stakeholders, including at the grass roots level
Improved opportunities for scaling up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measurable increases in the rate of uptake
Enhanced cost-effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research, extension and development takes place more or less simultaneously
Greater empowerment of partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased investment in capacity building activities and measurable improvements in the abilities of partners
Positive changes in organizational behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participatory priority setting ● Shared responsibility for problem solving ● Changes in organisational and management structures, less bureaucracy, more efficient and streamlined decision making ● Subsequent partnerships take less time to form and mature
Leads to a strong multiplier effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Impacts that extend beyond the direct reach of the partnership are observed ● Formation of new partnership arrangements or leveraging of existing relationships to address new challenges

Although each experience had distinguishing characteristics it was possible for the workshop participants to distil key lessons and associated from their experiences (Table 2.).

Table 2. Key Lessons and Recommendations for those wishing to support the formation

Lesson	Recommendation
<p>Time: Establishing and building research partnerships takes considerably longer than establishing conventional research projects.</p> <p>Time is required to obtain full buy-in to shared goals and objectives, to build trust and understanding among partners, and to reach the point where the partnership is actually delivering on its promises.</p>	<p>Allow one to two years before most partnerships begin to deliver results and achieve impact.</p> <p>Where partnerships already exist it may be more efficient and effective to invest in these, to seek to leverage previous investments rather than to form new partnerships</p>
<p>Flexibility: Successful partnerships dynamic relationships and were characterized by open-ended planning, and were able to respond to changing needs, through flexible financial management.</p>	<p>Mechanisms for management must enable flexibility allowing new partners to join over time and others to leave once it is clear that their role has changed or been fulfilled.</p>
<p>Dynamic leadership: Successful partnerships were characterized by vibrant leadership. Successful partnerships usually embraced the principle of subsidiarity and decentralised decision making.</p>	<p>Delegate responsibility to those leading a partnership and using broad accountability frameworks to ensure and monitor delivery.</p>
<p>Complementarity and comparative advantage: The strongest partnerships are those that explicitly recognize and build on the strengths of the partners, properly acknowledging (both formally and informally) the contributions of each. The capacity of partner organisations and needs of a partnership evolve and change over time.</p>	<p>Partnerships require on-going internal mechanisms to allow the partnership to respond more effectively to changing needs and opportunities. Responsibility and authority for implementing this continuing activity should be vested with project leaders and seen as complimentary to formal mid-term and end-of-project monitoring and evaluation activities.</p>
<p>Livelihood approaches: Partnership approaches that that enabled researchers to understand true community-level development priorities proved to be more effective.</p>	<p>Innovative ways of empowering local communities should be formally encouraged. Such as using non-deterministic community development approaches supported by links to micro-finance initiatives rather than directed participatory approaches to achieve adoption of specified technologies.</p>
<p>Public-private partnerships: Private organisations, whether non-profit or for-profit, tended to be more nimble and adaptive. Leaders saw these differences as a source of strength, and built on them</p>	<p>Need to sanction – in fact, actively promote – a much higher degree of interdependence, interaction and influence between and among diverse partners.</p>
<p>Transparency: Successful partnerships were characterised by transparency in planning, decision making and financial management. Achieving true transparency was not easy. It required a shared understanding and acceptance that transparency benefits everyone, and is was closely linked to efforts aimed at building trust, dynamic leadership, and flexibility.</p>	<p>The policies, rules and regulations that govern partnerships need to be designed in ways that ensure transparency. Appropriate incentives (and disincentives) aimed at promoting transparency must be put in place.</p>

These findings became the key of the recommendations articulated in the policy brief produced by the project.

6.3 Workshop method

Given the extent of the adaptations to the innovation history method, the approach we used can be considered a method in its own right (Annex A: LEISA_March 2006.PDF). The method was judged by workshop participants and facilitators as something worth repeating.

The joint construction of a timeline of significant partnership events prompted interaction and analysis both within and between case studies. The phased workshop format worked well because it gave participants concrete and immediate goals. Participants were engaged effectively in shaping the products and determining how the workshop developed, becoming advocates and resource persons for the following stage.

The method represents a relatively quick and economic way of surfacing and socializing lessons from innovative experiences that can have an immediate impact on policy. The workshop was able to produce sufficient materials to produce a policy brief and partnership resource materials.

The workshop was largely successful. Firstly it produced sufficient materials to produce the workshop outputs, which are a policy brief and resource materials on working in partnership. Indeed, NAIP asked for immediate feedback and NCAP has agreed to promote the policy brief. NAIP has also said they want to provide the resource materials to teams preparing consortia proposals.

In the end-of-workshop review participants said they liked the workshop structure, and its flexibility, which they felt led to real participation and a free and frank exchange of ideas.

The policy study carried out before the workshop created an awareness of the workshop and its outputs amongst the policy makers and senior research managers. The timeline exercise worked well; it stimulated dialogue between case study resource people, in particular those from different organizations, as to which were the significant events, and why they were significant. Asking case-study participants to identify the actors associated with each significant change encouraged people to think about partnerships and their relationships.

The main dissatisfaction voiced by participants was with the policy panel session. People felt that the discussion did not adequately address the issues identified in the first three days of the workshop. Some participants were disappointed that some of the policy panel were absent⁹.

Reflection amongst the facilitation team suggests that whilst their expectation was that the panel would act as resource, helping workshop participants gain insights into policymaking and how it can be influenced thereby building upon the issues identified in the policy paper. However, having focused on policy messages and distilling key issues on day 3 there was an expectation from participants to engage and influence a policy audience through the panel discussion on these points.

6.4 Feedback on SHG Guidelines

As described earlier more than 70 representatives of target user groups were consulted to obtain feedback on the Guidelines in the form that they had been used.

The main outputs of feedback were:

1. Generation of some 40 case studies¹⁰ written-up by volunteers
2. The proposal that the *Guidelines* should consist of a series of exercises that users should go through and familiarise themselves with

⁹ Panel members provided time for two interviews and gave verbal commitments to attend, which were followed by written invitations. In the end several had competing commitments; in fact there was only one unexplained absence.

¹⁰ The term 'case-study' is not favoured by CPSL, and it does not have a ready translation in Hindi. It is used here because it readily conveys a meaning in English. However, what we are talking of here could also be described as accounts of experiences which are important in that they carry lessons.

3. The *Guidelines* should include pictures, as well as copies of the posters / flash cards / 'codes' that are used by volunteers to promote discussion of key issues during group facilitation
4. Need for referencing, to support assertions e.g. that SHG activity is less in E. India than in South India.
5. Need for some more explanatory material, which may be missed in the narrative style which has been adopted for the *Guidelines*. (An example: selection of village volunteers is well-described since it is a stage in the process of moving from 'unspectacular entry' to engaging with village people in group formation; however there is nowhere an explanation of *why* volunteers are important).

We drew upon the feedback from the consultation exercise in the following ways.

It was decided to use 7-10 case studies¹¹ as a final chapter of the *Guidelines*. The case studies which have been generated by SLPS volunteers and CPSL staff are given below (in synopsis) alongside the lessons drawn from them (Table 3). This analysis provided a key criterion for selection for inclusion in the guidelines. Case studies selected in this way were then further reviewed to make sure that there are no important information gaps in the write-up for the *SHG Guidelines*.

Many of the experiences point to the lesson to which the secretary of CPSL Sunil Chaudhary keeps returning, that poor people are highly inventive in identifying income-generating activities¹² and do not need development agencies to engage in 'developing capacity' or 'skills enhancement' or the search for 'livelihood opportunities'¹³.

It was decided not to pursue the development of 'exercises' as this would change the nature of the *Guidelines* from a narrative to a workbook, and would almost certainly have resulted in loss of the 'pick-up' factor which originally attracted Sanjay Kumar.

Pictures were incorporated. To reduce costs posters / flash-cards could be in black and white or half-tone.

During editing broad generalisations were removed unless they can be readily supported with information (without spending time on searching for reference material). Generalisations about CPSL-facilitated SHGs were supported using information from the CPSL database.

A new feature of the *Guidelines*' structure/design i.e. a series of 'issues boxes' containing (fairly short) pieces of text which address topics such as that mentioned (importance of volunteers) in a reflective or *analytical* way, rather than in the *narrative* style of the main text.

¹¹ These case studies are different from those considered at the project workshop

¹² The records of CPSL & SLPS substantiate this point. Of earliest 50 groups established by R7839, 100 members have moved above poverty line.

¹³ He goes further, to say that it is counter-productive for an agency to concern itself with, or control, the purposes for which a loan is made, since this raises the issue of the responsibility of the development agency in the case of failure of the enterprise.

Table 3. Synopsis of SHG experiences and lessons learnt which fed into the development of the SHG Guidelines

<i>Experience (summary)</i>	<i>Lesson(s)</i>
1. A poor farmer took a Rs 600 loan to cultivate onions; subsequently he has taken a Rs3,000 loan to rent 1 bigha of land and grow rice and wheat.	Move from landlessness to tenant farming; willingness to take larger loans based on successful experience with a small loan; availability of larger loans as groups mature.
2. The public distribution system PDS (for essential goods e.g. kerosene at subsidised price) does not work well because store operators only open infrequently (e.g. once per month). If a poor person has no money at this time they cannot take advantage of the system. However by taking a loan they can access the favourable prices intended to benefit them.	A very small loan can be highly productive in giving access to money when it is urgently needed for consumption purposes. The same point applies to a loan which enables a poor person to avoid taking credit from a trader.
3. One group member has taken a loan to fund travel of his two (young adult) sons a 1400 km journey to Gujarat for employment.	Loans are used for a wide variety of purposes, meeting a wide variety of needs; 'acceptable purposes' for loans cannot be laid down by a development agency.
4. One has taken a loan for the entry fee to matriculation exams.	- ditto -
5. A group member had a small business of hawking saris, cloth etc. on to neighbouring villages. On foot he was only able to cover 3-4 villages. By taking a loan for a bicycle he has been able greatly to expand his business, covering many more villages and also carrying more stock.	
6. One poor woman makes basket-work products, some of which she normally has to sell each day (within the village) in order to buy food. She took a loan to enable her to buy food for a week (?) and thus to accumulate a stock which she took to a local market where she was able to sell for a higher price.	As (2) above: these are aspects of the theme of loans as 'liberation' – i.e. enabling choices which are not possible when the imperative is to ensure survival day-by-day, which may involve selling services or goods at low prices and buying consumption needs at high prices or with expensive credit.)
7. Volunteers have increased their capacity for facilitating calculation by group members of cost-benefit ratios of loans and income-generating activities. For example: A woman bought an ox which she sold after 3-4 months for a price only slightly higher than she paid. Her group volunteer suggested she might really have made a loss because the difference between buying and selling price would hardly cover the cost of feeding and caring for the animal. Her answer was that the dung had been important to the family as fuel, and that this compensated for the cost of feed. The profit from the sale was therefore genuinely all profit.	It is important to understand how the costs and benefits are understood by the individuals involved
9. A woman who was not a SHG member at the early part of the project sold land to finance the marriage of her daughter. Later she joined a SHG and around this time her husband's hand was fractured. She took a loan and her husband got treatment which saved his hand. She subsequently said that she realised (after joining the SHG) that she could have taken a loan for her daughter's marriage and not have lost a productive asset (her land).	A whole set of important issues are here: Loans for medical treatment can be highly important in enhancing livelihoods (both directly and also because good health is related to earning/productive capacity. Loans for 'consumption' or 'social' purposes can be important in that they enable people to avoid losing productive assets. Thus the distinction between production and consumption loans is largely spurious and the refusal by microfinance lenders to allow 'consumption' loans is likely to be misconceived.

Table 3. Cont'd

<p>10. CPSL has calculated, from volunteers reports, that Rs. 1,500,000 will be needed in March/April of next year to finance loans to SHG members (about 60 in all) who have asked their volunteers to find loans to enable them to take cash leases of land. The best terms for such a lease are available at this season (which is the main time of marriage and many landowners are looking for funds for this purpose. If someone wanting to rent land is not able to negotiate a cash lease at this time, they have to wait until the start of the cropping season in June, when they may have to agree to a share-cropping arrangement which is much less favourable to the cultivator than a cash lease.</p>	<p>This is another example of the way in which access to a loan may open choices and put someone in a relatively strong negotiating position.</p> <p>[A case study / account of experience does not need to relate only to a single individual or family; in a sense it has more weight if as in this case it shows quite a large number of people following an economic opportunity that access to credit opens up to them.]</p>
<p>11. Dairies in town sell cows at a low price at end of their lactation. Some SHG members have taken loans to buy such cows, keep and feed them, get them in calf again and then sell them newly-calved with their calf. They get up to 100% more than they bought the dry cow for originally.</p>	<p>An example of an innovative business idea, reinforcing the point that people do not need development agencies to seek out 'livelihood opportunities' for them.</p>
<p>12. A scheduled caste widow needed Rs. 2,000 for her daughter's (modest) marriage. This was more than her group had in their fund (at a fairly early stage of its development), and at that time members had no access to microcredit from an institutional lender. Without a loan she would have needed to sell her 4 goats. All groups in the village combined their funds to make a loan to her. She repaid within a year, without selling any goats. She is now taking land on cash lease with a MFI loan and is hiring ploughing service.</p>	<p>Importance of conserving productive assets (see also case 9 above).</p>

7. Contribution of outputs

This programme development activity contributes to NRSPs strategy for uptake promotion and is situated, predominantly, in the India node. It promotes uptake of research findings, by clearly differentiated audiences, drawing upon communication products tailored to meet the needs of these groups. The activities will contribute to the achievement of the following OVI's at the purpose level in the NRSP Programme logframe:

By March 2006, new knowledge from NRSP's research that can benefit the poor in use at the levels specified by at least two of the following:

- Institutions supplying services to the poor (domain W)
- Relevant policymakers (Domain X)

Policymakers

As was described above, the director NATP/NAIP indicated support for the PD assignment at a very early stage in the PD assignment process. Despite an extremely hectic schedule he joined the policy panel session of the workshop and in a post workshop meeting the project director of the ICAR NATP / NAIP project requested we provide immediate feedback from the workshop to feed into the ongoing development of the NAIP project. The document (Annex A: NAIP.PDF) was drawn upon during a review mission of NAIP week of November 12th 2005. Whilst attribution is not possible subsequent revisions to the NAIP proposal documentation, particularly relating to the timeline for formation of consortia reflect the findings of the workshop.

The final policy brief was distributed to a pre-established audience of senior research managers and policymakers and is available in an electronic PDF format (Annex A: Encouraging effective.PDF).

Institutions supplying services to the poor

The Indian Government has recognised that the sustainable transformation of Indian agricultural sector from an orientation of only food self-sufficiency to one in which a market orientation is important for poverty alleviation and income generation.

Further it has determined that in order is to accelerate the collaborative development and application of agricultural innovations between public research organizations, farmers, private sector and other stakeholders.

Through the ICAR National Agriculture Innovation Project (NAIP) the World Bank is investing over \$200 M to support the development of a partnership based approach to research by ICAR.

Key indicators of success are the increased availability of knowledge products and public awareness messages of the National Agricultural Research System (NARS); increased collaboration among the NARS with other public organizations, farmers and farmer organizations, civil and private sector organizations; increased availability and use of technologies that have been jointly developed between consortia partners for strengthened production to consumption systems and enhanced rural livelihood security; and a strengthened capacity for basic and strategic research.

The experiences of the case studies captured in the partnering resource are of direct relevance to NAIP. NAIP having reviewed drafts of the materials confirmed their intention to distribute the resource materials produced by the PD assignment to potential NAIP applicants (in both paper and electronic forms) through both its main office and help desk.

This provides an ideal way to reach those institutions (NARS, public organizations, farmers

and farmer organizations, civil and private sector organizations, predominantly in India) that are being encouraged by ICAR to engage in partnership and consortia models for research.

The *Guidelines* have already reached an audience of development professionals as described above. Recognising that this constitutes a potentially viable market as Delhi based publisher Vani Prakashan has agreed to publish and sell the guidelines through their distribution network. Securing agreement of a publisher to use their distribution network provides the potential of reaching the intended development audience in India. CPSL retain ownership of the copyright and page proofs. Royalty payments will be made to the copyright holder.

To raise awareness of the dialectic approach developed by project R7839 and tested in projects R7830 & 7839, we submitted general interest 500-word success story for inclusion on the DFID India web site, this still under review as at May 10th 2006.

By March 2006, outputs from 20% of NRSPs projects, and the programme as a whole used in the international research and development system

The products described above will all be accessible to the international research and development system, primarily through the avenues established above. The materials will also be accessible through the DFID NRSP website.

The experiences of the PD assignment in applying the innovation history methodology will be promoted to the international research and development system through the LEISA Magazine (<http://www.leisa.info/>).

The CGIAR Institutional Learning and Change initiative (ILAC) provided financial support for Boru Douthwaite to attend the workshop. Boru led the preparation of the LEISA publication described above and subsequent to the workshop the PD assignment leader of PD 140 has also received an invitation to submit a brief to ILAC. This brief will focus on the partnership experiences and lessons learnt. It will be professionally edited and promoted by ILAC through their ILAC website¹⁴.

Future opportunities

The research of the DFID NRSP programme as a whole and India suite 2 is particularly relevant to the innovation and learning approach. As is indicated above, this approach is currently being promoted both within India and to a wider international audience.

As ICAR move towards a period of change, testing new institutional arrangements for research with support of NAIP, the opportunity for ongoing influence exists.

The further promotion of these findings (and the research products upon which the workshop drew) represents a significant opportunity. Dr Rasheed Sulaiman in his review of the workshop products specifically highlighted synergies between the findings of this PD assignment and the DFID Crop Post Harvest Programme.

Looking beyond the institutional arrangements needed to deliver effective research. Projects R7830 & 7839 developed an extremely effective approach for community development (the ***dialectic approach***) and participatory technology development. The elements of the dialectic approach are captured in the SHG Guidelines published by Vani Publishing. A number of organisations have adopted and further developed the dialectic approach. A significant opportunity exists to document ex-post both the continued innovation and how this has led to livelihood benefits for the poor and socially disadvantaged.

¹⁴<http://www.cgiar-ilac.org> Verified 30th December 2005.

8. Publications and other communication materials

Books and book chapters

None

Journal articles

Peer reviewed and published

None

Pending publication (in press)

None

Drafted

None

Institutional Report Series

None

Symposium, conference and workshop papers and posters

None

Newsletter articles

None

Academic theses

None

Extension leaflets, brochures, policy briefs and posters

GYA and ICAR-RCER, 2006. *Partnering for Impact: Learning from Institutional Change in Indian Agricultural R&D.* GY Associates Ltd, UK and Indian Council of Agricultural Research – Research Complex for the eastern region, India. 24 pp.

Douthwaite, B., Sikka, A., Sulaiman, R., Best, J. and Gaunt, J. 2006. *Learning with innovation histories.* LEISA magazine, 22: 42-43.

GYA and ICAR-RCER, 2006. *Encouraging Effective R&D Partnerships: Lessons Learned from the Indian Experience.* 4 pp

Media presentations (videos, web sites, TV, radio, interviews etc)

None

Manuals and guidelines

CPSL 2006. *SHG Guidelines* (Hindi). Vani Prakashan, New Delhi. 124pp

Reports and data records

None

Project technical reports including project internal workshop papers and proceedings

GYA 2005. *Guidance Materials for participants of workshop to be held at the NASC Complex New Delhi, 7-10th Nov 2005.* GY Associates Ltd. 18pp

Best J and Chaudhary S. 2005. *SHG Guidelines: background to the project, achievements to November 2005 and plans for completion.* GY Associates Ltd. 15pp.

GYA. 2005. Learning from Institutional change: Preliminary feedback for NAIP. GY associate Ltd. 7pp

Scoping studies

None

Datasets

None

9. Keywords

Institutional learning and change, institutional change, partnership, consortia, livelihoods, Natural Resource Management,