



POLICY BRIEF

ON

DEVELOPMENT OF EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS FOR INNOVATION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

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BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa (CCARDESA) is a sub-regional not-for-profit intergovernmental organization comprising 16 member countries. The organization brings together researchers from the national agricultural research, extension and education institutions, the private sector, and other strategic partners to generate, share and promote knowledge, technologies and innovations to solve common challenges facing agriculture in the sub-region. CCARDESA was founded by SADC member states to harmonise the implementation of agricultural research and development (R&D) in the SADC region. CCARDESA intends to address agricultural research and design issues in the SADC region through the following interventions:

- Coordinating implementation of regional agricultural R&D programmes
- Facilitating collaboration among stakeholders of the national agricultural research systems (NARS)
- Promoting public – private partnerships in regional agricultural R&D
- Improving agricultural technology generation, dissemination and adoption in the region through collective efforts, training and capacity building.

As regards to relationship in AR4D partnerships, CCARDESA serves as a forum for promoting regional agricultural research and strengthening relations between NARES, in SADC region including the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

According to CCARDESA (2019), in recognition of the importance of partnership as a major tool for enhancing AR4D in the SADC, CCARDESA has built strategic partnerships with key organisations and NARES in SADC. CCARDESA also works with COMESA, the SROs and FARA to strengthen its collaboration in the implementation of CAADP. CCARDESA also found it necessary for establishing partnerships, collaboration and joint activities with relevant organisations such as Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), African Network for Agriculture and Africa Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS).

Despite the fact that CCARDESA has championed agricultural research and development trajectory over the past decade through collaborative partnerships/engagements, however, the agricultural research for development (AR4D) environment in which CCARDESA was formed has changed dramatically over its 10-year existence. There is therefore a need to have adequate policies to foster effective partnerships that will support climate-relevant innovation to facilitate transformation of the agricultural sector in the SADC region.

This policy brief is therefore meant to stimulate some actions that could be game changers needed to strengthen CCARDESA Partnership engagements with interventions at both the institutional and individual levels to generate, share and promote knowledge, technologies and innovations to solve common challenges facing agriculture in the SADC region.

CHALLENGES OF AR4D PARTNERSHIPS

According to ILAC (2010), partnerships are complex and inherently unstable arrangements that can take unpredictable courses in which sometimes external or internal shocks can occur

at any point, requiring adjustments in activities or strategies, or even transitions to new institutional arrangements. Furthermore, it was indicated that sometimes, partnership priorities may likely evolve with the activities and output evolve as well. For example, a partnership that initially focused on research might later need to engage in capacity building or other development-related activities.

Secondly, partnership is usually designed to bring together all relevant actors within a region that can contribute to improving a given situation on an equal basis. This seemingly simple principle actually raises a number of different issues. Firstly, to bring together all relevant actors is not an easy task as this implies having around one table not only different government institutions (usually of different levels), many of which are traditionally competing with or ignoring each other but also social partners, entrepreneurs, NGOs, the education and scientific sector, representatives of the civil society and many more. The interests of such partners, and therefore their approach to certain problems will usually be rather different.

A change in partners' involvement happens relatively frequently, as the participation of each of the organisations involved depends to some extent on the personal commitment of their representatives and on how such representatives fulfill their roles and functions. Partnerships are organised as networks, and when members of the network change, the networks can change. This variable can be reduced by formal contractual co-operation agreements, so that organisations and institutions are committed as bodies rather than as individuals. Nonetheless, the variable exists, and should not be overlooked.

The study on effective partnership for innovation highlighted some gaps which affect effective partnerships. These include unawareness of most commonly known AR4D partnerships, unclear structure (typology/nomenclature) and hierarchy of partnership agreements, low rating by partners of binding instrument such as MoU, limited number of platforms for communicating and sharing knowledge, the insufficiency of funds for AR4D partnership activities, capacity development gaps in AR4D partnership in the region and the minimal participation of some member countries in AR4D Partnership activities.

The study also showed the weaknesses and threats to effective AR4D partnerships which include administrative complexities, inadequate Joint resource mobilization, reduced funding for AR4D & the agriculture sector, competition for visibility among stakeholders, challenging macro-economic environment, level of commitment by some partners, limited understanding on resource sharing in partnerships, effects of climate change and vulnerability, increased competition for resources in AR4D, emerging/unexpected challenges – COVID 19 and change in donor priorities.

All these gaps and challenges call for adequate policies for intervention in bridging the gaps for effective partnerships for innovation in the region.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ATTAINING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP FOR INNOVATION

The potentials for strengthening effective partnership for innovation in SADC region are there if adequate strategy and policies are put in place and implemented. This is because multi-stakeholder partnerships have been widely promoted as mechanisms to deliver development

goals such as Agricultural Research for Development (AR4D). For example, in an attempt to provide reasons why there should be partnerships, ILAC (2010) indicated that three reasons are commonly identified in literature on partnership. The first reason is to gain access to resources (including knowledge) that are not available within a single organization. The second reason is to improve knowledge management across the boundaries separating organizations that share similar long-term goals (e.g., sustainable poverty reduction) but traditionally work in isolation. Finally, the third reason is to build the capacity to influence policies or economic

However, the good news is that there are opportunities and lessons which will be useful to strengthen CCARDESA'S Partnership programme so as to deliver its mandate successfully so far there is a policy framework to back them up.

- **Vision and goals:** A common vision and agenda need to be developed based on shared interests and goals. It is important to recognize that each partner comes to the table with distinct interests, priorities and agendas that need to be understood and respected.
- **Leadership:** Partnerships imply a shared leadership among respected individuals, recognized and empowered by their own organizations to build consensus and resolve conflicts. Often one organization takes the lead on managing the process.
- **Partners' commitment:** Forming an effective partnership involves 'knowing your partner' and attracting partners (both organizations and individuals) who not only have the resources and capacities needed to achieve the partnership goals, but who are also strongly committed to the partnership and its goals.
- **Process facilitation:** Process facilitation is needed to stimulate and channel dialogue, prevent conflicts, build trust and balance competing interests in a partnership. As dialogue and joint decision-making are central to partnering, it is important that leaders be active listeners who ensure that all interests are heard and taken into consideration.
- **Roles and responsibilities:** An effective partnership should have recognisable and autonomous structure to help establish its identity. The roles and responsibilities of individuals in a partnership need to be clearly defined and based on an understanding of and respect for individual interests and capabilities.
- **Communication, knowledge sharing:** Never leave your partner behind, always keep them informed and engaged. If the organisational structure of a partnership is the glue that holds it together, then communication is the grease which allows it to operate smoothly. Effective communication will lead to effective partnership.
- **Partner organizations' culture, policies and procedures:** The ways that partnerships operate and the results they produce are strongly influenced by the culture, policies and operating procedures that prevail within the partner organizations.
- **External socio-economic and political environment:** Partnerships operate in a macro context affected by political and socio-economic currents. In some cases, these favour the partnership mode, in others they do not. When establishing and managing a partnership, it is important to be sensitive to shifting currents in the macro context that can affect the partnership. Where partnerships cross national boundaries, they need to

be aware of national issues and trends that influence individual partners' priorities and room for manoeuvre.

- **Capacity development for partnership management:** Working in partnership requires a wider range of skills and abilities than is usually in place in agricultural research organizations. In addition to technical competencies, professionals working in partnership require new skills in management, knowledge sharing, communication, mediation, facilitation of group decision making, and policy influence.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation of partnership processes and results:** Improved M&E is needed in two main spheres: the evaluation of partnering processes and the evaluation of the results of partnering (the value added by partnering, both for the individual partners and for society in general). The partners and external stakeholders would also like to have better ways of gauging the benefits or 'value added' of partnering (the net benefits of partnering compared with other ways of working).
- **Resource mobilization:** Nevertheless, coordination, no matter how effective will not keep partnerships dynamic and long lasting, because resources for carrying out concrete agreed upon activities in a timely manner would be equally important. Such resources need to be managed and shared in a transparent and equitable manner to maintain commitment to the cause

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY SHIFTS

1. Establishment of Partnership and Capacity Development Unit Policy

The multi-stakeholder platforms and stakeholders' adequate knowledge and skills in the generation and adoption of AR4D innovations are now becoming hallmark of successful AR4D partnerships. Therefore, as a strategy and policy, there is a need for CCARDESA to establish a Partnership and Capacity Development Unit. This unit will coordinate all partnership arrangements and capacity development for both CCARDESA staff and stakeholders. This Unit shall also be in charge of developing good funding proposals which may invariably interest some donors that CCARDESA can tap on for more funding for AR4D activities. The unit will also be responsible for the following:

- Guide agreements and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/Letters of Agreement (LoA), Directly manage global-level partnerships
- Maintain records and database of partnerships agreements
- Monitor contact with institutional partners
- Convene strategic partnership meetings
- Secure legal advice (where applicable)
- Backstop and facilitate synchrony and synergy among partnerships
- Advise CCARDESA Management on global-level partnerships
- Rationalize the collection of information for reporting purposes.
- Maintain an CCARDESA wide partnerships database
- Support mobilization of resources for partnering by writing funding proposal
- Support the M&E Unit to monitor and evaluate the impact of partnerships

2. Establishment of Information Clearing House/Hub Policy

The importance of data and information in the implementation of AR4D partnerships cannot be overemphasized, there is a need for the establishment of information regional clearing house/hub to host data base, system models and supporting tools for the region. This should be hosted by CCARDESA so that all stakeholders can access information from there.

3. Documentation of Data Base of Experts Policy

One of the important strategies that CCARDESA needs for effective AR4D partnership in SADC region is to identify the expertise within the region. CCARDESA is in a better position to document the data base of experts in the region around various disciplines. For example, policy practitioners, M&E, Biotechnology, crosscutting issues etc., this will help in setting up centres of excellence or clusters of experts based on discipline among the member countries that can be called upon when they are needed.

4. Data Sharing and Intellectual Property Policy

Efforts should be made in the region to identify data sharing policies and issue of intellectual property policies guiding ownership within the CCARDESA member countries. This may likely have an impact on efforts to boost regional data sharing initiatives and benefits of sharing technologies and innovations developed either through joint research or publicly supported research of member countries. With this a researcher can be acknowledged for his or her invention.

5 Adequate Integration of French and Portuguese Speaking Countries into CCARDESA Programmes Policy

French and Portuguese countries form about 43% of countries in CCARDESA, there is therefore a need for more integration of the French and Portuguese speaking countries within the SADC region into CCARDESA programmes through translation of documents into French and Portuguese Language, visit and a workshop for Francophone and Portuguese speaking partners for more awareness of CCARDESA functions and become active partners in the AR4D programmes. This should be backed up with a policy document.

6 Policy Guideline for Formalization of MoU

For sustainability of the AR4D partnerships, institutions/organisations should follow best practices such as having a binding MoUs, establishing effective multi-disciplinary team, good relationship and thrust. CCARDESA can use this in reviewing if necessary and signing of MoU with existing partners that have not signed and new stakeholders that want to partner with CCARDESA.

7 Gender and Youth Mainstreaming into AR4D Activities Policy

The roles of gender and youth in agriculture have become important that there should be a strong policy backing their mainstreaming into AR4D activities. Article 20.2 of the SADC Protocol on Environmental Management for Sustainable Development requires that 'State parties shall undertake gender analysis and gender mainstreaming of all environmental management, climate change and sustainable development policies, programmes and projects which also applies to AR4D. Therefore, this policy is very important to fulfil SADC Protocol.