Building multi-stakeholder processes in agricultural research for development in Burundi
Please refer to this case study as:


Photography cover: Doublearc. Doublearc grants anyone the right to use this work for any purpose, without any conditions.
Other photography by Dieuwke Lamers, Marc Schut and Jean Prosper Kanyaruguru.
After staring at his computer screen for 30 minutes and unconsciously listening to the sounds of political unrest in the streets of Bujumbura, Burundi’s national facilitator of Humidtropics still had not written a single word for his May 2015 monthly report. He turned his chair and looked through the window, but his mind was somewhere else. It was in the Highlands of Gitega, with the research for development activities that had been implemented half-a-year ago and with the farmers hosting these and awaiting him to give guidance. He thought back to the many signs of success and lessons learned that he had experienced during the last months. The fragile political situation in Burundi had somewhat disrupted the multi-stakeholder process, and, despite their efforts and well thought out action plans, most field activities had been postponed during this month...

But no – he thought to himself – this was not how it was going to be. He was not going to sit back when things were finally taking shape. He was going to fight! And with this thought, the national facilitator turned back his chair to his computer screen and wrote just seven words on the document called ‘Monthly updates for Humidtropics Burundi, May 2015’: “We had the courage to go on.”
Acknowledgements

These case studies were developed under the framework of the Consortium for Improving Agricultural Livelihoods in Central Africa (CIALCA) which is funded by the Belgian Directorate General of Development Cooperation (DGDC). CIALCA forms part of the CGIAR Research Program on Integrated Systems for the Humid Tropics (Humidtropics).

We would like to acknowledge Humidtropics and the CGIAR Fund Donors for their provision of core funding without which this research could not deliver results that eventually positively impact the lives of millions of smallholder farmers in tropical Americas, Asia and Africa. For a list of Fund donors please see: www.cgiar.org/who-we-are/cgiar-fund/fund-donors-2

In addition, throughout the process of data collection for, and the writing of, this case study, many people have given valuable contributions. Without them, developing this case study would not have been possible, and therefore we want to express our sincere gratitude to them.

First, we want to thank all interviewees for their time and openness when talking about the multi-stakeholder process as they experienced it. Second, we want to thank the people who participated in Humidtropics events and took photographs during platform meetings and other activities. Third, we want to thank Catherine O’Dea for her profound and sharp language editing and Luc Dinnissen who gave this case study an attractive design.

Humidtropics, a CGIAR Research Program led by IITA, seeks to transform the lives of the rural poor in tropical America, Asia and Africa. Research organisations involved in core partnership with Humidtropics are AVRDC, Bioversity International, CIAT, CIP, FARA, icipe, ICRAF, ILRI, IITA, IWMI and WUR. humidtropics.cgiar.org

Published by Humidtropics
October 2015. This document is licensed for use under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported Licence
Humidtropics, a program for impactful research for development

CGIAR is a worldwide partnership addressing agricultural research for development (R4D), whose work contributes to the global effort to tackle poverty, hunger and major nutrition imbalances, and environmental degradation. The CGIAR Research Program on Integrated Systems for the Humid Tropics (Humidtropics) is led by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and aims to improve the livelihoods of the rural poor living in (sub)tropical areas in sub-Saharan Africa, Central America and the Caribbean, and Asia. An important intervention strategy in Humidtropics is the strengthening of multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnerships to achieve development impact at scale. To achieve this, Humidtropics supports local level innovation platforms (IPs) in its Field Sites that experiment with various technological and institutional innovations aiming to tackle site-specific constraints. In addition, Humidtropics supports R4D platforms at (sub-)national level that bring on board the key scaling actors in the agricultural system and that form the link between local and national level. Innovations that are successfully tested in the IPs are intended to be scaled up by the R4D platform to generate impact on a larger scale (Humidtropics, 2012).

But why go to all this trouble to bring together researchers, farmers, policymakers, the private sector, extension workers and NGOs in IPs and R4D platforms? This approach is rooted in the belief that encouraging multi-stakeholder interaction and collaboration can foster engagement, ownership and demand-driven R4D that is better tailored to the needs and realities of farmers and other stakeholders. Consequently, this approach will lead to development impact and outcomes (Humidtropics, 2012).

Humidtropics adopts an integrated systems perspective. Instead of targeting one single pre-selected commodity and trying to boost its productivity at farm level, Humidtropics focuses on stimulating productivity, natural resource management (NRM) and institutional innovations across different levels in order to achieve more sustainable impacts. It considers all farm enterprises and their interactions, as well as nutrition, social differentiation (e.g. gender and youth), and policy and markets (Humidtropics, 2012).

In November 2012, Humidtropics started activities in the West African Humid Lowlands, the East and Central African Highlands, Central America and the Caribbean, and the Central Mekong – all of which are referred to as Action Areas or Flagships. Initially, a variety of planning and capacity building workshops were organised for key actors from
the participating countries (referred to as Action Sites) to coordinate activities and build their expertise and knowledge on facilitating the multi-stakeholder processes and systems-oriented R4D.

This case study zooms in on multi-stakeholder processes in the East and Central Africa (ECA) Action Area or Flagship that were launched on 20 May 2013 in Bukavu, DR Congo. The ECA Flagship encompasses the Rwanda, DR Congo, Burundi, Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia Action Sites. More specifically, the case study describes and reflects upon the first two years of Humidtropics in Burundi (Box 1), aiming to outline the multi-stakeholder process as it unfolded and highlighting lessons that can be learned from this. In Burundi, activities are mainly taking place in Gitega (also referred to as a Field Site), a province in the Central Highlands of the country. The case study is based on meeting minutes, progress reports, event documentation, four individual and two focus-group semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, data originate from an IP and an R4D platform reflection meeting, and participatory observation by the authors. Some interview quotes used in this case study have been slightly edited to enhance readability.

**BOX 1 Burundi’s biophysical, demographic and institutional context**

Burundi is a relatively small, resource-poor and landlocked country with a hilly landscape that drops into a plateau in the east. It covers 25,680km² of land and has an average altitude of 1,700m (varying between 772m and 2,670m). Annual average temperatures vary between 23°C and 17°C, with an average annual rainfall of 150cm and two rainy seasons (February to May and September to November). Major environmental challenges are soil erosion (caused by overgrazing and agricultural expansion to marginal lands), deforestation (caused by tree cutting for fuel) and wildlife losing habitat. In 2014, 11.8% of the over 10 million people living in Burundi (median age 17 years) lived in the urban areas and, in 2002, 68% of its population was estimated to live below the poverty line. At that time, agriculture accounted for 93.6% of employment (CIA, 2015).

Burundi has a history of conflict that continued until 2005 and claimed the lives of more than 200,000 people. After 2005, the country began a period of recovery and reconstruction and experienced an annual GDP growth of about 4% in the period 2006 to 2014. Nevertheless, challenges like government corruption, low administrative capacity, a weak legal system, poor education systems, high poverty and limited transportation infrastructure continue to hamper genuine development. Also, the availability of food, medicine and electricity remains constrained. Currently, about 42% of Burundi’s national income comes from foreign aid, making it highly dependent on external donors (CIA, 2015). In 2015, political unrest again became an issue in Burundi. Consequently, many people fled the country and several donors withdrew their development aid.
The Humidtropics Burundi Field Site encompasses Carire and Murayi Communes in Gitega Province (Photo 1 and Figure 1). The communes are located close to Burundi’s second largest city, Gitega, and are part of the Central Highlands. The Central Highlands region is a densely populated area with an average temperature of 18°C and large and sometimes swampy marshes. The natural vegetation in the region has mostly disappeared, and overexploitation, soil erosion and poor farming practices are gradually reducing soil fertility on the hills. A major challenge in the region is the acidic nature of the soil, which also increases acidity in the marshes due to erosion of acid alluvium.

How multi-stakeholder processes in Burundi contribute to achieving Humidtropics’ intermediate development outcomes (IDO)

IDO 1: Increase income for rural households
“Livestock production and higher crop yields for farmers provide opportunities for increased household income.”

IDO 2: Better nutrition for rural households
“Integrating pigs and nutritious crops like legumes and tree tomato in banana, cassava and maize cropping systems contributes to improved nutrition.”

IDO 3: Increase farm productivity
“Participatory testing of various potato and yam bean varieties helps farmers select those that are most productive.”

IDO 4: Sustainable natural resource management
“Pig manure adds nutrients to farm fields, and animals are fed with crop residues and feed crops that simultaneously control soil erosion.”

IDO 5: Empowered women and youth
“Surveys and focus group discussions are leading to better understanding about the gender implications of introducing pigs.”

IDO 6: Enhanced innovation capacity
“Lack of veterinary services made farmers and researchers discuss innovative options for jointly setting up a sustainable pig medicine supply system.”
The initiation of the multi-stakeholder process in Burundi

Launching the program and deciding where to work

To support the multi-stakeholder process in Burundi, the national research institute ISABU (*Institut des Sciences Agronomiques du Burundi*) was requested to act as the facilitating organisation. ISABU had previously partnered with the CGIAR centres in Burundi under the CIALCA program that had supported partnerships to coordinate activities and stimulate demand-driven research. With the aim of building on existing collaboration and activities, it was decided to re-engage with former CIALCA partners, including ISABU. Within ISABU, a soil scientist and former Minister of Education was the person designated to execute the role of national facilitator (also referred to as Action Site Facilitator – ASF). Over time, he was assisted in this role by colleagues from ISABU, researchers from IITA and Bioversity International, representatives of the NGOs Reseau Burundi 2000+ (RB2000+) and Floresta, two extension officers and two farmers. In different compositions, these people formed the team that facilitated the multi-stakeholder processes in Burundi.

The official launch of Humidtropics in Burundi took place on 2 and 3 July 2013 in Bujumbura, Burundi’s capital, and brought together 69 participants representing a wide variety of stakeholder groups. Research organisations, government officials, NGOs, agri-business people, financial institutions, women’s organisations and journalists participated, most of whom were from Bujumbura. The workshop started with presentations about Humidtropics and four previously identified potential Field Sites that represented the major agro-ecological zones in Burundi and gender and agriculture in Burundi. Subsequently, participants split up into groups relating to the proposed Field Sites and started brainstorming about challenges, opportunities and activities going on there. From this, they developed a list of potential Entry Themes for each site in relation to the different objectives of the program, and they prioritised the four most important Entry Themes. The group decided to start activities in the Central Highlands (*Plateaux Centraux*). Finally, the national facilitator presented the tasks of the R4D platform and next steps were agreed.

---

1 The Consortium for the Improvement of Agriculture-based Livelihoods in Central Africa (CIALCA) is an agricultural research for development program that has been active since 2006 in the Great Lakes region, including Rwanda. It is currently led by the CGIAR centres IITA and Bioversity International in collaboration with national research institutes. CIALCA initially focused on improving productivity of legume- and banana-based systems to enhance income, nutrition and environment, and in 2011 it expanded thematically – increasing its focus on farming systems, livestock integration, climate change, multi-stakeholder collaborations and understanding drivers of impact. At that point, CIALCA agreed to partner with Humidtropics to work on R4D activities targeting banana, cassava, seed systems and markets, irrespective of location.
upon. These included among other things that issues discussed during the workshop would be verified and finalised afterwards and a coordination committee would be strengthened into the national R4D platform.

Two months later, on 3 September 2013, a Field Site launch meeting was organised in the Central Highlands, bringing together similar stakeholders as in July but this time more of them coming from Gitega (Photo 2). Again the meeting started with presentations (about Humidtropics, its launch in July, innovation platforms, sites and Entry Themes selected), followed by discussing, verifying and replacing some of the sites selected and implementation strategies (potential partners) discussed in the Bujumbura launch. Then, participants started identifying major cropping systems, their advantages, their constraints and potential field activities relating to these, which would feed into the development of concrete R4D activities for the Central Highlands later on. The next steps agreed upon included the initiation of a local level platform in the Central Highlands (a representative from RB2000+ was selected as local facilitator) and regular committee meetings for follow-up and guidance. Overall, ideas and potential field activities discussed during this second launch were very general and remained to be finalised later on.

In the period following the launch workshops, many small meetings were conducted involving the national facilitator and the small group surrounding him. The group was assisted by the IP facilitator and a university professor in Gitega. During their meetings, these people followed up on issues discussed in the launch workshops and talked about how to organise and what to do with regard to establishing platforms, selecting sites and possible field activities. According to the IP facilitator, his main role was to sensitise farmers about Humidtropics and interact with them to collect more information on which sites, major agricultural systems and constraints/problems Humidtropics could address. For this, he first talked to community leaders and extension services and afterwards invited farmers to discuss this again.

The collective efforts from the launch workshops and follow-up meetings led to the formulation of the major challenges and Entry Themes on which to work (Table 1).
Concretising demand-driven and systems-oriented research themes

Despite these efforts, the Entry Themes were not very concrete. Hence, a Rapid Appraisal of Agricultural Innovation Systems (RAAIS - Schut et al., 2015; Box 2) workshop was organised on 26 February 2014 in Gitega, to further refine and clarify the Entry Themes. During the workshop, constraints and challenges of different stakeholder groups were analysed, and more concrete Entry Points for productivity, NRM and institutional innovation were identified to sustainably intensify the agricultural system in Burundi (Schut and Hinnou, 2014).

**BOX 2 Rapid Appraisal of Agricultural Innovation Systems (RAAIS)**

RAAIS is a diagnostic tool for integrated analysis of complex agricultural problems and innovation capacity. RAAIS workshops facilitate different stakeholder groups (farmers, the private sector, NGOs, government and research) to systematically identify their constraints and opportunities for innovation to address complex agricultural problems. Participants analyse these constraints and opportunities with regard to different problem dimensions (biophysical, technological, socio-cultural, economic, institutional and political) and different levels (national, regional, local) and subsequently prioritise them. In this way, participants jointly create an abstract representation of the agricultural system that provides a comprehensive basis for selecting context-specific Entry Points for sustainable intensification. Key to RAAIS is that it increases awareness of how stakeholders’ challenges are interrelated and require collective action and also that the process is both visual and interactive. Using large sheets of paper, tables and coloured cards, stakeholders literally group around the problems they identify and discuss their various options to resolve these (Schut et al., 2015).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major challenges</th>
<th>Entry Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cultivated crop varieties are susceptible, low yielding and of limited nutrition and market value</td>
<td>1. Introduction, evaluation and dissemination of improved varieties (e.g. high yield, nutritious, pest and disease resistant) adapted to farmer production systems and improving their market value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cropping systems are often inappropriate and there is limited knowledge on integrated farming systems</td>
<td>2. Integration of agroforestry and livestock into farming systems for sustainable intensification and improvement of agro-ecological integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Continuous cropping on small farm sizes due to high population density, resulting in highly degraded soils</td>
<td>3. Improvement of NRM and soil fertility through the introduction, evaluation and dissemination of innovative technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Farmers have limited savings to reinvest in agriculture and need credit facilities</td>
<td>4. Provision of innovative solutions for farmers’ access to financial services and credit to intensify production and increase market opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 1** Major challenges and corresponding Entry Themes.
In total, 24 people participated; they more or less equally represented the different stakeholder groups but were predominately men (19 males versus five females) (Photo 3). These participants were first asked to individually list their Top 5 challenges and constraints relating to the Entry Themes and later to repeat this exercise in homogeneous stakeholder groups. Finally, all participants decided together on the most important constraints in relation to productivity research, NRM research and institutional research, and these became the Entry Points for the R4D activities in Gitega. In general, the majority of constraints mentioned by stakeholders were institutional in nature (Schut and Hinnou, 2014) (Table 2).

In the period following RAAIS and preceding the establishment of the platforms, several capacity development activities were organised at ECA Flagship level for key people working in Humidtropics (e.g. the national facilitators). The objective of these activities was to increase these people’s understanding of the R4D approach and strengthen their capacities to facilitate multi-stakeholder processes.

“Here [the launch workshops] it was very global, but with RAAIS it was clear. (...) We came up with many constraints, many solutions and what to do, with farmers. (...) I can say that what we have done here [the IP launch], it was okay, but what we are doing now, comes from RAAIS.”

National facilitator (8 March 2015)

**Establishing a national level research for development platform**

Preceding the R4D platform launch meeting, the national facilitator together with IITA staff talked about who best to invite for the meeting. Criteria were based on the different stakeholder groups they wanted to have on board and the input individual representatives of these groups could give to the platform. According to the national facilitator, the identified people were contacted in advance to explain Humidtropics, ascertain their willingness to participate and give reasons as to why these potential participants should come to the meeting.

The R4D platform launch meeting took place on 24 June 2014 at Kaddesh conference hall in Bujumbura and brought together 14 participants, most of whom represented research organisations and the remainder government, NGOs or financial organisations (Photo 4). The meeting started with an explanation of, among other things, the Humidtropics philosophy (humidtropics.cgiar.org/impact-pathway) and modus operandi, its objectives, the multi-stakeholder platform
concept and the top constraints of the different stakeholders as identified during RAAIS. Next, the R4D platform discussed and defined some R4D activities that could be implemented in the upcoming planting seasons, including who could assist in this.

Some stakeholders who were invited for the R4D platform launch meeting but were unable to attend were contacted again later on and became platform members in a later phase of the process.

**Establishing a local level innovation platform**

On the day following the R4D platform launch, the local level IP was established in Murayi Commune (Photo 5). Just as with the R4D platform, potential IP members were carefully selected and contacted in advance – this time with the help of a local extension officer. Then, on the day of the IP launch, Humidtropics, the Field Sites selected including the reasoning behind this, and the roles and responsibilities of the IP (and briefly of the R4D platform) were explained. Next, motivational speeches were given as well as presentations about major challenges in the region and potential solutions. Then, participants were asked to rank the occurrence of different crops according to planting seasons, indicate their livestock preferences and list the kind of cropping systems cultivated in Carire and Murayi Communes. In general, the cropping systems mentioned by the IP overlapped with those mentioned by the R4D platform but, according to participants, were not considered very innovative. It was decided that the IP would continue discussing more innovative cropping systems later on.

**How the process continued**

After the first period of big launch meetings and additional preparation and follow-up work in smaller groups, the R4D platform and the IP in Burundi finally became operational. Hence, activities began to be channelled through these platforms, and implementation of on-
farm R4D activities began. An overview of the process is presented in Box 3.

---

**BOX 3 Overview of R4D events under Humidtropics Burundi**

**2-3 July 2013**
Launch meeting Humidtropics in Bujumbura. Presentations are given about Humidtropics, the four Field Sites identified, and gender and agriculture in Burundi. Then, participants brainstorm in groups about challenges, opportunities and activities going on in these sites, and make a list of potential Entry Themes. Finally, they rank the sites and decide to start activities in the Central Highlands.

**3 September 2013**
Launch meeting Humidtropics in Gitega. Presentations are given about Humidtropics, IPs, the Bujumbura launch, and Entry Themes and Field Sites selected. Then, participants discuss Field Sites and partners as identified in the first launch meeting and change some of these, followed by discussion of major cropping systems in the Central Highlands and their advantages and challenges.

**July 2013-February 2014**
Facilitation team meets frequently (first national facilitator and CGIAR researchers, later more people become active) to discuss how to implement the program, establish platforms and verify Field Sites selected and possible field activities. Also, they sensitize farmers and follow up agreed activities.

**26 February 2014**
RAAIS workshop conducted in Gitega to identify priority constraints and Entry Points for innovation to sustainably intensify the agricultural system in Burundi.

**24 June 2014**
R4D platform launch meeting. The program, the platform concept, the platform’s and members’ responsibilities and the outcomes of RAAIS are explained; then participants determine cropping systems on which to work in the Field Site.

**25 June 2014**
IP launch meeting in Gitega. The program, the IP, the platform’s and members’ responsibilities, major constraints and opportunities in the region are explained and potential solutions are suggested. Next, IP members rate cropping systems by area and season.

**4 August 2014**
R4D platform meeting to define action plans for R4D activities on which to work under CIALCA.

**13 August 2014**
R4D platform meeting to continue working on R4D activities under CIALCA.
14 August 2014
IP meeting to discuss activities proposed by R4D platform. IP members discuss whether changes are needed, when and where to start implementation, popular varieties and local contact persons. Using this as a base, lead persons for activities later finalise work plans.

20-24 October 2014
Implementation of intercropping trials.

4 November 2014
R4D platform meeting to be informed about the concept proposal for platform-led innovation fund (also known as ‘Cluster 4’). Platform members discuss the proposal and identify some missing topics in terms of the proposal matching the needs expressed in RAAIS.

4 November 2014
R4D platform subcommittee of researchers and the national facilitator meet with situation analysis team and discusses the plans.

19 November 2014
R4D platform meeting to broaden the scope and further specify the proposal for platform-led innovation fund based on template developed in a regional meeting with the facilitators in Nairobi. The platform works in different groups in relation to ‘systems productivity and NRM’, ‘nutrition’, ‘market and income’, and ‘gender.’

24 November 2014
Implementation of platform-led innovation fund activities starts, with focus group discussions to discuss challenges, problems faced and needs of farmers with regard to pigs and implementing this R4D activity.

8-13 December 2014
Survey on manure flows conducted and materials for pig sties are distributed. Farmers start building pig sties, and small test fields to compare different yam bean seeds are established.

1 December 2014
CGIAR researchers meet and reflect on the platform process. They decide to shift focus from R4D platform to IP level and to establish a small core team consisting of members of both platforms (henceforth referred to as core team).

4 December 2014
Researchers from IITA and the national facilitator meet with potential core team members. They explain their ideas, ask whether these people agree to form the core team and discuss urgent challenges of IP farmers in relation to trials. The Director General of extension joins the meeting to be aware about the core team and its function.

9 December 2014
First core team meeting. The national facilitator explains about the program and the core
team. Then, the group discusses 1) its role, tasks and activities as a team; 2) how to collaborate with the IP, R4D platform and farmers; 3) role division and communication within the team; 4) frequency of meetings and members’ time investment; 5) practicalities of functioning as a team; and 6) follow-up of the meeting.

30 December 2014
Meeting to provide core team with materials (papers, raincoats, a communication fee). They give an elaborate update about field activities and challenges and opportunities relating to these.

5 January 2015
IP reflects on the platform process and R4D activities to date in the Humidtropics platform reflection meeting.

6 January 2015
R4D platform reflects on the platform process and R4D activities to date in the Humidtropics platform reflection meeting.

5-10 January 2015
Farmers with pig sties receive three pigs each.

22 January 2015
Potato trials established under platform-led innovation fund.

3 February 2015
Core team meeting to discuss progress and potential challenges relating to R4D activities and how to tackle these, relevance of potential research questions and plans proposed by CIALCA researchers and nutrition research that students from the University of Burundi will start soon. Comments made by the core team are passed on to the people concerned.

30 January-20 March 2015
Nutrition survey conducted by a student from the University of Burundi.

9-12 February 2015
Focus group discussions with farmers about challenges and opportunities for pigs in Gitega.

16-17 February 2015
Soil sampling in maize–soybean trials and start of soybean harvesting. IITA lead researcher demonstrates harvesting to extension officers of core team who will continue.

23 February 2015
R4D platform meets and the researcher supporting activities implemented under the platform-led innovation fund presents the first financial and technical report. Platform members comment on this.

9-10 March 2015
Training on pig health conducted by ISABU.
11-13 March 2015
Training on pig feeding conducted by ISABU.

27 March 2015
Facilitation team and additional CGIAR researchers meet to discuss ongoing activities, continuation of existing activities, starting new activities, their plan to open another Field Site in Cibitoke, R4D platform and member engagement and an action plan.

15 April-30 May 2015
Installing/building composters on farms involved in R4D activities with pigs.

16-17 April 2015
Local field assistant is hired by IITA to assist in monitoring R4D activities. He is introduced to participating farmers and core team.

16 April 2015
Core team meeting with local field assistant and IITA lead researchers to discuss R4D activities: progress, challenges and how to act on these.

17-24 April 2015
Several informal talks involving the national facilitator and IITA researchers to reflect on the poor performance of some R4D trials and insufficient involvement of the IP and R4D platform since start of core team. It is decided to urgently organise platform meetings to re-involve members in the process.

25 April 2015
Political turmoil in Burundi. Many activities are put on hold – except for urgent ones – and most international research staff leave the country.

May-August 2015
The members of the facilitation and research team still in Burundi continue to liaise with local core team members and technician (who is in the field 2-3 times a week). They also meet regularly to organise field work and secure resources (as the donor of the platform-led innovation fund is initially hesitant to provide them because of the security situation). Field work goes well, and in June the national facilitator and local IITA staff meet with the core team and visit farmers’ fields.

12 May 2015
Harvesting potato trials.

31 May 2015
Harvesting yam bean trials.

End of May 2015
Several meetings at the Burundi border between local IITA staff and country representative/lead researcher of banana intercropping trials. They discuss management of office
and projects in absence of international staff and hand over data collection sheets for trials. Local staff member visits Gitega to pass on information on trials to technician.

19 June 2015
R4D platform meeting to discuss second technical report of Cluster 4 activities. R4D platform is updated about seasonal activities and temporary relocation of international CGIAR research staff.

27-29 July 2015
Second survey on nutrient flows.

3-7 August 2015
Second round of introducing pigs in Gitega; 90 pigs are distributed.

17 August 2015
Survey and focus group discussion on gender implications of the introduction of the pigs.

Platform meetings and the start of field activities
After both the R4D platform and the IP had discussed the R4D activities on which to focus in Burundi, another regional meeting was conducted in July 2014 with researchers involved in CIALCA to learn about Humidtropics and discuss fieldwork options. Although both programs had significant overlap in methodology, researchers’ overall understanding of multi-stakeholder processes and the systems approach was still limited. According to one participant, this – together with budgetary and expertise constraints – restricted their ability to plan research activities that really went beyond farming system and intercropping research on which they had been working until then.

In August, the R4D platform met again – twice – to discuss and prioritise the outcomes generated in the RAAIS workshop, their own launch meeting and the CIALCA meeting, and work in groups on action plans for five different R4D activities proposed (Photo 6). These were 1) banana-bean/tree tomato intercropping, 2) maize-soybean intercropping with climbing bean in rotation, 3) cassava-bean intercropping and assessing options for livestock integration, 4) potato-bush bean rotation, and 5) rice-vegetables rotation.

The action plans were in turn presented to the IP on 14 August 2014. The members discussed whether they thought changes were required, where and when to start implementation, which varieties they preferred and local contact persons (Photo 7). The IP agreed with the activities but noted that the rains had started and some fields were already being ploughed, requiring implementation to speed up. Also, they pointed out that the livestock component – which had been a
predominant priority in RAAIS – was still missing. For the time being, this had been put aside by the R4D platform because of lack of funding and expertise in this domain. The same was true for many of the institutional and economic constraints mentioned.

On the basis of the input given by IP members, the theme leaders and groups were asked to finalise their work plans. However, two of the five activities ended up being rejected after all. According to the national facilitator, these were the ‘rice-vegetables rotation’ as the lead person was not able to finish the work plan on time, and the ‘potato-bush beans rotation’ since the activity was more development oriented than research oriented as well as very costly. In addition, he said that they had been marked as less systems oriented than the other activities. By the end of October 2014, the approved field trials were implemented by the responsible R4D platform members in collaboration with trial hosts and extension officers. An exception was made for beans for the banana-bean intercrop and the cassava-bean intercrop as the suitable planting period for beans had already passed.

Simultaneously, starting in June 2014, a selection of R4D platform members began working on a proposal for additional activities being implemented through a platform-led innovation fund (also known as ‘Cluster 4’). This funding was allocated to, and managed by, the platform and intended to strengthen the integration of, and the connection between, other (field) activities. The lead group consisted of staff from IITA, Bioversity International, ISABU (including the national facilitator) and the university. After joint brainstorming, the researchers from ISABU finished the writing process. Two rounds of submission to the Humidtropics Management Team were needed to get the proposal for the platform-led innovation fund accepted in September 2014.

After this approval, the proposal for the platform-led innovation fund was presented to the whole R4D platform during a meeting on 4 November 2014 (Photo 8), and all members were asked to give feedback on it. The proposal added the initially lacking livestock component to the R4D activities, but there was still a significant overlap with what was already happening in the field as well as a strong focus on productivity. This was pointed out during the meeting by a visiting scientist from IITA/Wageningen University who urged the platform to go back to the needs identified during RAAIS and more closely link the proposal to those. Additional domains of impact were also suggested (e.g. communication, gender and nutrition). Later on, these domains were added to the proposal by the national facilitator and one of his colleagues from ISABU. Subsequently, the final proposal was taken to a regional coordination meeting in Nairobi on 6-7 No-
November 2014 where all national facilitators of Humidtropics in East and Central Africa were trained on how to make the proposal more systems oriented. This fed into a second R4D platform planning meeting on 19 November 2014 where the platform continued working on the final platform-led innovation fund proposal using a pre-made template featuring the main domains of impact of the program: ‘systems productivity and NRM,’ ‘nutrition,’ ‘market and income,’ and ‘gender.’ Initially, this task caused confusion among R4D platform members. However, after additional explanation about what was expected from them, they actively started working on a detailed outline of R4D activities, including timespan, budgets and responsible persons. Challenges during this meeting were that those planning for the different domains sometimes had limited expertise in these, not everyone spoke the same language and planning was done in separate domain-based groups, all of which restricted profound integration of the different action plans.

After the meeting, the national facilitator pooled the results from the group work to finalise the proposal, and, in the last week of November 2014, implementation of this second round of R4D activities took off. According to the researcher supporting activities under the platform-led innovation fund, the introduction of livestock (pigs) was prioritised and other work would be added later depending on availability of funds.

The research for development activities in Burundi are summarised in Box 4.

**BOX 4 Research for development activities in Burundi**

Starting at the end of October 2014, the first four R4D trials were implemented, testing different intercropping systems in Gitega, in Carire and Murayi Communes. Subsequently, pigs for manure production, potato research and fodder crops were introduced, and research activities focusing on nutrition, gender and the platform process started.

**Improved banana-legume/tree tomato intercropping**

Trials on banana (improved varieties FHIA 17 or FHIA 25 and the popular local variety Incakara) intercropped with beans (variety MLB 122-94B) or tree tomato were established in Gitega to study yield, manure use preferences and labour. Through participatory on-farm research, this experiment aims to improve productivity, income and nutrition (e.g. beans provide a source of protein and tree tomatoes provide a source of vitamins), while protecting the environment and conserving natural resources. In total, 2x4 trials have been established.
Maize and soybean intercropping with climbing beans in rotation

In total, 11 on-farm maize and soybean intercropping trials were established in Gitega using varieties recommended by the IP. Subsequently, climbing beans were planted that use the post-harvest maize stems as stakes. The experiment tests the effects of different intercropping technologies (including farmers’ own practice) and the monocrops, in terms of grain yield production, crop performance and labour requirements. Analysis will include economic modelling and trade-off analysis between production and NRM based on different resource inputs and outputs. Eventually, this research should contribute to improving productivity, food security, nutrition and soil fertility management (Photo 9).

Cassava and beans

Mainly focusing on increasing productivity in terms of economic yield and crop residues for livestock feeding, improving income and soil fertility, six trials on improved cassava and legume intercropping have been established. The trials demonstrate the performance of three cassava varieties (two improved and one local) in monocrop as well as in intercrop with kidney beans – however, because the planting time had passed, beans could only be added in the second planting season. Data collection includes crop yield data and crop destination data, allowing economic analysis.

Pigs (livestock) for manure production

By late January 2015, pigs had been introduced to 10 farmers in Caripe Commune (incl. five female) and 10 farmers in Murayi Commune (incl. four female) of varying economic status. Preceding introduction, focus group discussions were conducted to discuss challenges and farmers’ needs with regard to pig management and research implementation, and surveys on manure and fertiliser usage were carried out. To construct pig sties, farmers were given the bulk of the building material (e.g. wooden planks and roof tiles) but were requested to provide the rest as well as the labour themselves. Each participating farmer – who (almost) all also hosted intercropping trials – received three pigs on the condition that, after reproduction, three piglets would be passed on to another farmer under the same conditions. Most pigs provided were female as these can give birth and were therefore preferred by farmers. Linked to the introduction of the pigs, compost piles were built, fodder options were experimented with, focus group discussions to discuss pig health were held, and training on pig health and pig feeding was conducted. During the focus group discussions, ideas were raised about setting up a system whereby farmers would contribute money to buy medicines, which any of them could use if required (or use part of the pooled money) and pay it back later.

Multi-purpose fodder crops

To tackle farmers’ challenge to feed their livestock/pigs, innovative multi-purpose fodder options were explored: that is, planting grasses (Pennisetum) that yield good fodder on relatively little land, while simultaneously having a dual natural resource management function (e.g. erosion control and banana mulching) and the introduction of the relatively unknown dry-tolerant yam bean. Yam bean – which was introduced as livestock feed but can also be eaten by human beings – provides high yields and is easy to multiply, since it is the tubers not the beans/seeds that are eaten. The first phase of yam bean introduction encompassed small testing fields to investigate the performance of three different varieties.
Identifying most effective potato varieties

Delayed due to miscommunication between farmers and the R4D platform, four potato trials were established in Gitega in January 2015 (Photo 10). The trials test the performance of six different potato varieties provided by ISABU in Gitega. The plan is to select some of these varieties to start potato-bean rotation.

Nutrition survey

Under supervision of the R4D representative from the University of Burundi, some students conducted surveys and focus group discussions on nutrition, including food habits (also related to land assets), problems relating to food and nutrition, and major causes of these problems. The research took place between 30 January 2015 and 20 March 2015. Eventually, it should also generate advice on potential solutions/strategies for improvement.

Researching the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder platforms

A variety of event registrations forms, questionnaires, pictures, audio recordings, videos, participant lists, meeting minutes and so forth is used to thoroughly study the multi-stakeholder process through which Humidtropics is functioning. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, this research investigates the effectiveness of the platform process. As part of this platform research, social network analysis questionnaires were used in August 2014 to capture the basic information on the networks within the R4D platform in Burundi. The information collected will be analysed to identify potential strengths and weaknesses of the R4D platform to enable and improve collaboration, knowledge exchange and learning, and to influence and lobby among different stakeholders at different levels in agricultural problems. Insights will result in advice to the platforms and feed into social network research.

Gender study

To strengthen the gender research in Humidtropics, a workshop was organised in November 2014 to train key persons in conducting focus group discussions and collecting empirical data on the relationship between gender norms, agency and agricultural innovation. The information collected will be used to write case studies about the communities studied and facilitate better understanding of the gender-based constraints and the social context surrounding them. This should feed into the design of R4D activities to actively promote the empowerment of women and youth and stimulate lasting and equitable agricultural development. In Burundi, these focus group discussions were conducted in December 2014 in Cibitoke Province.

The establishment of a core team to strengthen communication

On 1 December 2014 when the first round of intercropping trials had been established and the second round of fieldwork was about to take off, a selection of researchers from IITA and Bioversity International involved in R4D activities conducted a reflection and strategic planning meeting. They expressed concern that to date most attention and resources had been targeting the R4D platform, which required a lot of pushing to keep things going. More specifically, they pointed out
that there was i) little engagement among R4D platform members to participate or invest in activities (e.g. because members did not see how the platform benefited them), ii) poor linkage between the R4D platform (mainly involved in planning and coordinating activities) and the IP (local stakeholders at implementation level), iii) little ownership among both R4D platform and IP members with regard to R4D activities and iv) insufficient integration between the different R4D activities. Hence, the researchers decided to try shifting focus to the local IP level (Figure 2).

The underlying idea was that at local level things become more concrete than when activities are being planned from within a meeting room far away from the field. Consequently, it might be easier for IP members to see how the platform can benefit them and to motivate them to participate. In addition, it was envisioned that increasing these local partners’ influence and decision-making power would strengthen their perceived ownership. The concrete change agreed upon was the establishment of a core team (Box 5) consisting of four IP members and three R4D platform representatives who would become actively involved in all ongoing R4D activities. In this way, they should ensure better communication between the IP and the R4D platform, speed up responsiveness in the event of problems arising on the ground and improve integration of activities by functioning as a slot through which all R4D activities had to pass.
**BOX 5 Composition of the core team**

The core team is a small gender-balanced team of people involved in R4D activities who represent both the R4D platform and the IP (Photo 11). Its three R4D platform representatives are the national facilitator and the coordinator of the platform-led innovation fund, both from ISABU, and the multi-stakeholder documentation person from IITA. ISABU and IITA are also the leading research institutions for current R4D activities. The four IP representatives are active in either Carire or Murayi Commune. There is one female farmer leader from Carire, one female agriculture teacher from Murayi and two male extension officers who are each responsible for one of the Communes and assist the researchers in the R4D work.

After a brainstorming session between IITA and Bioversity International researchers and the national facilitator, potential candidates for the core team were asked about their willingness to fulfil this important role. The team met officially for the first time on 9 December 2014 (Photo 12) to discuss these roles and the main activities as a team, how they would collaborate with the R4D platform and the IP, their in-team roles and responsibilities, frequency of meetings, and some practicalities like how to organise communication and minimal requirements to function as a team.

**Increasing energy in the field**

The establishment of the core team initially led to a reduction in IP and R4D platform meetings (Photo 13). In the six-month period after the core team was established, the IP came together once for a platform reflection meeting, and the R4D platform met twice: once for a platform reflection meeting and once to be informed about the technical and financial report of the platform-led innovation fund. In contrast, the core team met at least six times during this period. In addition, subsets of this team collaborated and interacted even more frequently, and the IP representatives regularly visited trial hosts and updated the R4D platform representatives about these farmers.

In this period, the core team definitely proved its usefulness. Existing problems relating to field work – previously unknown by R4D platform members – suddenly came to light. For example, some banana suckers had been stolen from research fields, and some IP farmers apparently had not planted anything in their fields as they still expected to receive potato seeds. In effect, although potato trials had been among the initially planned R4D activities discussed in the last IP meeting in August 2014, the farmers had never realised that this trial had been rejected by R4D platform members later on. Learning about these and other challenges in the Field Site enabled the R4D platform representatives in the core team to pass on this information to the R4D platform representatives regularly visited trial hosts and updated the R4D platform representatives about these farmers.
form members, who subsequently stepped in to solve the problems. In addition, when new R4D activities arose – for example, additional activities planned by CIALCA researchers and students of a university professor from the R4D platform who wanted to work on nutrition – the core team met with the new participants to assure alignment with, and relevance for, existing R4D activities. In this way, the core team became the main channel for feedback and planning that linked the key partners involved in R4D activities.

At the same time, the implementation of additional field work financed by the platform-led innovation fund brought in some additional elements of success: greater flexibility for activities to be demand driven, better interlinkage between R4D activities and increased visibility. Firstly, the researcher supporting activities implemented under the platform-led innovation fund conducted multiple surveys and focus group discussions preceding implementation to further specify the planned R4D activities together with farmers. Moreover, when the problem emerged of farmers still awaiting potato research, it was the platform-led innovation fund that provided flexibility to cater for this need and implement additional potato trials to prevent farmers from waiting for nothing and perhaps losing trust in the platform. Secondly, as the central activity of the platform-led innovation fund was the introduction of pigs (Photos 14 and 15) for manure production, it provided an opportunity to link this work to the other R4D activities which made use of manure application and which could render residues to be fed to the pigs. Thirdly, the introduction of pigs also generated a lot of enthusiasm on the ground, which – combined with the increased number of activities and the actual presence of researchers in the field at that time – helped to attract attention and make the platform’s work more visible.

Nevertheless, although these two interventions – the core team and the platform-led innovation fund – undeniably triggered progress in R4D activities in terms of catering for farmers’ needs and improving collaboration between involved farmers, extension officers and researchers, they simultaneously comprised a challenge for the multi-stakeholder process. Firstly, their success in linking those directly involved in the fieldwork somehow made additional involvement of the R4D platform and the IP as drivers of R4D work redundant, thus reducing the link with partners in the R4D platform and the IP that were not (yet) directly involved in ongoing R4D activities. Secondly, as was explained by the IITA country representative, the positions of the local core team members (e.g. farmers and extension officers) created a barrier for communicating frequently with their superiors or other stakeholders in higher power positions. Lastly, new partners that wanted to come on board the IP might not be aware of the core
team and its function, thus inhibiting their participation. Realisation of this dual effect – halfway through April 2015 – motivated the facilitation team to immediately plan additional platform meetings to try to restore the involvement of these partners. However, as this insight was quickly followed by political turmoil in Burundi, this plan was not fully put into action and was postponed.

Continuation under political uncertainty
From the end of April 2015 onwards, political turmoil paralysed most activities in the capital Bujumbura. Many people fled the country, and research and development organisations (among which IITA and Bioversity International) relocated their international staff outside Burundi.

Nevertheless, the national facilitator, the researcher supporting the platform-led innovation fund, and other IITA and Bioversity International staff continued the R4D activities as much as possible. They kept in contact with the local core team members and appointed a field technician. The field technician went to the field 2-3 times a week to follow up field activities and help farmers to overcome constraints. He also collected data with the lead researchers of R4D activities and informed everyone about what needed to be done. Also, they regularly met among themselves to coordinate the fieldwork and secure a second round of platform-led innovation funding which the donor initially was hesitant to provide because of the security situation in Burundi. Halfway through June, the national facilitator and an IITA representative went to the field to conduct a core team meeting and visit the R4D activities. Shortly afterwards – on 19 June 2015 – an R4D platform meeting was organised to discuss the second technical report of the platform-led innovation fund and activities for the coming season, and to inform platform members about the temporary relocation of international research staff.

In this period, many field activities were conducted under the platform-led innovation fund. From mid-April 2015 until the end of May 2015, composters were built on farms that had received pigs, and harvesting of potato trials and yam bean fields took place on 12 and 31 May 2015, respectively. A nutrient flow survey was conducted between 27 and 31 July to complete previously collected data. Moreover, between 3 and 7 August, a second round of pig provision took place and a survey investigating the gender impact of introducing pigs was conducted between 17 and 21 August.
The facilitation team

Since the start of Humidtropics in Burundi, a national facilitator has facilitated the multi-stakeholder processes. This facilitator is employed by ISABU and has a background in soil science. Over time, varying in terms of intensity and presence, he has been assisted by colleagues from ISABU, staff from the research institutes IITA (the lead institution) and Bioversity International, staff from the NGOs Floresta and RB2000+, and four local partners who joined the core team (two extension officers, a school teacher and a farmer leader). Hence, in changing compositions, these people can be considered as the Humidtropics facilitation team in Burundi.

Initially, when the program was starting up and the multi-stakeholder platforms were not yet established, the main activities of the facilitation team were the preparation and follow-up of launch meetings and agreed-upon activities, organising logistics, lobbying for the platform and the program, discussing how to organise and implement the program, and identifying Field Sites and Entry Themes on which to focus. In this phase, the main players were ISABU, IITA, Bioversity International and Floresta (all based in Bujumbura), and RB2000+ (based in Gitega). Within the team, the country coordinator from IITA gave a lot of guidance in terms planning of the process. This coordinator and the representative from Floresta fulfilled the role of secretary, and the IP facilitator from RB2000+ focused on sensitising farmers, confirming sites and validating constraints identified in the launch meetings.

Following RAAIS in February 2014, the group continued to meet, but not as regularly as before. In this period, some of them joined capacity development workshops in Rwanda, DR Congo and Kenya that focused on increasing understanding of the program, platforms and facilitating multi-stakeholder processes. In this period, not much happened on the ground.

In June 2014, when the platforms were established and the platform-led innovation fund was introduced, the facilitation team’s main activities changed. That is, in addition to preparing and following up meetings and agreed-upon activities and organising logistics, they now also focused on selecting potential platform members, establishing the R4D platform and the IP, developing proposals and research protocols, organising platform meetings, documenting the multi-stakeholder process and implementing the R4D activities. The writing of research protocols and the preparation of trials were undertaken mainly by the lead researchers from IITA. Activities were implemented mainly by the coordinator from IITA in collaboration with
farmers and extension officers, and backstopped by the researchers (Photo 16). In this period, another scientist from ISABU who coordinated the implementation of activities under the platform-led innovation fund also became active. Additionally, IITA hired two social scientists to support the multi-stakeholder process in June and November 2014, respectively. The first one was a senior scientist with a global role in the program who had a mandate to strategically support and guide in the process. The second one was a junior scientist focusing on documentation and facilitation of the multi-stakeholder process. Around October 2014, the IP facilitator became less active in the facilitation team as the R4D activity he was supposed to lead was not approved and he could not get a memorandum of understanding with IITA as demanded by his organisation. Also, Floresta and some of the ISABU staff that had been involved at the start slightly reduced their participation.

In December 2014, when most field activities were either established or awaiting implementation, the facilitation team members from IITA and Bioversity International discussed a strategic shift of focus from national to local level and drove – together with the national facilitator and the lead person of the platform-led innovation fund – the establishment of the core team. From that moment onwards, the core team members and the IITA coordinator, in turn backstopped by the leading researchers from IITA (Photo 17) became the more active members of the facilitation team. Their main tasks in this phase were linking stakeholders, ensuring communication, feedback and quick responsiveness to problems/need on the ground, (assisting with) implementation, monitoring and data collection on R4D activity, improving integration between R4D activities, documenting the process, organising logistics and re-directing the process or activities when necessary.

**Linkage, communication and feedback**

With changes in the main actors in the facilitation team as well as the varying intensity of platform meetings, communication and feedback between the stakeholders involved in the multi-stakeholder process also changed.

In the first phase – before the R4D platform and the IP were established – face-to-face communication took place in many small meetings involving mainly IITA, Bioversity International and ISABU, informal meetings with strategic partners (including policymakers) and big launch meetings. Moreover, telephone, email and invitation letters were used as vehicles for communication. Communication be-
tween the national and the Field Site level took place mainly through the IP facilitator RB2000+ or when partners based in Bujumbura decided to join meetings conducted in the Field Site.

In the next period – once the platforms were established – the communication channels remained generally the same, except that platform meetings became an additional channel for regular face-to-face communication. These meetings often included oral updates, PowerPoint presentations, flipcharts, handouts, group discussions, informal talks and so on. In addition, the start of R4D activities added options for informal communication between local IP members and R4D platform partners involved in implementation.

Around December 2014 – when the core team was established – platform meetings became fewer, and most communication occurred through the core team members (Photo 18). Within the core team, the members from Carire and Murayi Communes facilitated communication between farmers and the rest of the team. They visited these farmers to inquire about the trials, challenges, opportunities, needs and next steps, and gave updates about this during their monthly core team meetings. In addition, the extension officers assisted with the on-farm R4D activities, backstopped by the coordinator from IITA, the researcher supporting the platform-led innovation fund, researchers from IITA and/or the national facilitator. In this way, more communication was enabled between the core team, the lead researchers and the farmers. Subsequently, information fed into the core team was communicated to active R4D platform members (e.g. IITA, Bioversity International, ISABU and the University of Burundi) through informal meetings, phone calls, emails and activity reports. In addition, the R4D platform met once on 23 February 2015 to discuss the technical and financial report of the platform-led innovation fund.

A challenge mentioned by one R4D platform member in relation to communication and collaboration is that platform membership keeps on changing. So, when meetings are conducted, one can find that some people are not aware of decisions that have been taken, and this can result in having to go back over, or even re-open, discussions that have already been decided upon. In contrast, an opportunity mentioned was that the venue for platform meetings should be rotated to different R4D platform partners. This would stimulate information circulation and visibility there. At the moment however, most meetings are organised at ISABU, which often is also highly represented in R4D platform meetings, as are CGIAR researchers.
“There is information sharing between the groups, but it is not enough. (...) It is not instantaneous, we have to wait for meetings, and between two meetings there is nothing.”

Researcher supporting platform-led innovation fund (9 March 2015)

In general, the ISABU researcher supporting activities under the platform-led innovation fund explained that the intensity of communication between R4D platform meetings is rather low. It is generally limited to those directly involved in activities – for example, when they coordinate their work or inform one another about what needs to be done. Other R4D platform members often have to wait for updates during platform meetings. This was confirmed by one of the IITA researchers who mentioned that, when she arrived in November 2014, some of her colleagues could not tell her what exactly was going on in the field, especially in relation to the recently started platform-led innovation fund. Moreover, during the R4D platform meeting of 19 November 2014 – when platform members were working on the platform-led innovation fund proposal – some of them did not know what this fund was. In contrast, the communication in the field as well as between core team members and R4D platform members implementing activities was more continuous and evolving.

Decision-making power over research activities

As Humidtropics aims to collaborate with different organisations and projects that already exist in the country, the pre-defined target areas, objectives, enterprises and expertise of these organisations and projects can potentially influence what is or is not possible to implement. Hence, whereas many R4D activities were funded through the relatively flexible platform-led innovation fund (which targeted the IP and had to cover Humidtropics’ general domains of impact), some others funds were more restricted. For example, CIALCA funds that enabled implementation of R4D activities through the R4D platform and the IP were intended to target cassava, banana, seed systems and market, irrespective of location. Other partners, for example GIZ and World Vision, which might have had other domains of impact, were bound to specific locations, other than the selected Humidtropics Field Sites.

Nevertheless, to stimulate the demand-drivenness of the multi-stakeholder process, a RAAIS workshop was conducted to identify the challenges and Entry Points of different (local) stakeholders. These were taken as the starting point for designing R4D activities. One year later, in a reflection meeting in January 2015, the platforms were asked to rate how much they thought that the current R4D activities
targeted the priority constraints. The perceived division of focus on the different constraints of both the R4D platform and the IP is shown in Table 3. It suggests that, around that time, platform members felt that the platform’s work focused most on two out of three productivity constraints, one out of two NRM constraints and one out of three constraints relating to institutions and markets.

The researcher supporting the platform-led innovation fund mentioned that the R4D platform has the power to direct research. It can propose activities, discuss field work plans and serve as the think tank for proposal writing. However, he also explained that the platform members tend to look to IITA or Bioversity International to provide input in terms of ideas as well as funds – something he considered logical as these were the ones initiating the whole process. He thought that the R4D platform was getting more vocal over time and starting to influence more; for example, the banana and tree tomato intercropping trial is really a platform member-proposed innovation.

“If you want the platform to benefit you, it can benefit you. Personally, I thought I could be involved and proposed doing something with students and it was accepted. Now my students are benefiting from that. It was really an opportunity to train them in the field (...) without the platform that would not have been possible. (...) Humidtropics is like a system and all fields can be touched, so if you want to benefit from it, you can

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Productivity (R4D platform 48% - IP 51%)</th>
<th>NRM (R4D platform 26% - IP 22%)</th>
<th>Institutions and markets (R4D platform 26% - IP 28%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constraint</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little knowhow of agricultural production techniques</td>
<td>20% 8% 20%</td>
<td>18% 8% 2%</td>
<td>25% 0% 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High pressure of diseases and pests (for crops and livestock)</td>
<td>20% 8% 20%</td>
<td>18% 8% 2%</td>
<td>25% 0% 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient improved varieties/ breeds in the crop-livestock system</td>
<td>20% 8% 20%</td>
<td>18% 8% 2%</td>
<td>25% 0% 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarcity of land and poor soil fertility</td>
<td>21% 1% 6%</td>
<td>22% 22% 0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acidity of agricultural land</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of material and financial resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of adequate sensitisation of the population to the adoption of innovation practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of agricultural credit policies to motivate the private sector to invest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3** Perceived division of focus of R4D activities in targeting site-specific constraints.
benefit from it. (...) However, if you don’t link your activity to the platform, you can’t have any interest. It is likely to follow."

R4D platform member from University of Burundi (9 March 2015)

In relation to the R4D platform process so far, it seems that one way for individual platform members to increase their influence on R4D activities is to become active players. For example, both the researcher supporting the platform-led innovation fund and a lecturer from the University of Burundi went on to actually design specific R4D activities after they agreed to implement or facilitate these. According to this university lecturer – who is involved in nutrition research – the R4D platform does provide opportunities for its members to become involved. However, it is still in its first year, and many organisations are involved in many activities and still seem to be in the phase of looking and deciding whether they really want to be involved. This is evidenced by the fact that many of them are sending representatives rather than the people that can really make decisions. They are still endeavouring to find their interest in the multi-stakeholder process.

At Field Site level, local stakeholders first had a chance to influence R4D activities by specifying major challenges, opportunities and cropping systems during the launch meeting of the program and the IP in Gitega. Next, they were involved in selecting concrete Entry Points for innovation during RAAIS and discussing action plans in the IP meeting on 14 August 2014, during which they made small changes in planned activities, decided on (local) varieties to use, and when and where to implement work. Moreover, when the researchers went to the field to implement R4D activities, informal interactions as well as some focus group discussions and surveys took place to assure local level input. Subsequently, when the trials were implemented, farmers could indirectly influence decisions regarding continuation of R4D activities through the extent to which they managed their fields. In addition, once the core team became active, its members – and through them the farmers – gained another opportunity to interact with the R4D platform members implementing research and hence influence their decision making (Photo 19). For example, this led to the addition of potato research in January 2015. According to the researcher supporting the platform-led innovation fund, they always try to involve farmers – either by asking their confirmation of pre-developed plans or asking their input before designing activities.

Discussion and lessons learned

The first two years of the multi-stakeholder processes under Humid-tropics in Burundi can roughly be divided into four phases. First, a
small team surrounding the national facilitator and the country representative of IITA organised launch meetings for the program and the platforms. They were supported by regional (ECA) Humidtropics staff. In addition, many small follow-up meetings between the participating CGIAR centres and ISABU were conducted to discuss how to implement the program. Second, after about one year, a new phase started of platform meetings, planning of R4D activities and implementation of the first field trials. Third, the establishment of the core team in December 2014 signalled again a new phase. In this period, few official platform meetings were conducted and activities focused on the Field Site. Collaboration and communication between the researchers, extension officers and farmers directly involved in field trials intensified tremendously, but R4D platform and IP members that were not directly involved in R4D activities were partly bypassed. From the end of April 2015 onwards, the last phase started. Because of the political turmoil, many international researchers backstopped the process from a distance while national staff from the research centres and the university involved in collaboration with local stakeholders continued managing R4D activities.

“In the Humidtropics proposal there is very little guidance in terms of implementation. Concepts like bottom up, participatory, group-based, demand-driven and systems-research, they sound all very nice, but in terms of actually how to implement it, there is very little guidance.”

IITA researcher (10 July 2015)

It is clear from looking at the first phase that there was considerable repetition in terms of topics discussed during meetings; many talked about where to focus in terms of Field Sites, Entry Points, cropping systems and/or major challenges. These are of course essential questions at the start, but the amount of repetition suggests that those implementing the program were still trying to find out how to go about this and were learning while doing. Potentially, some guidance in terms of strategies, tools or approaches to facilitate setting up multi-stakeholder platforms might have speeded up the process. The national facilitator expressed appreciation of such guidance emanating from capacity development events and the involvement of the social scientists from IITA and the RAAIS workshop.

In the second phase, challenges with regard to the R4D platform’s limited engagement, poor linkage between the IP and the R4D platform, little ownership among members of both platforms and little integration of R4D activities raise some questions. For example, can a
multi-stakeholder process that operates on national level (mainly planning) and local level (mainly implementation) work out well and generate ownership among platform members when strong linkages between the different levels are lacking – and, more drastically, should they even be separated? Or, how should the focus best be divided between these different platforms, with their respective levels and activities?

In the third phase of the multi-stakeholder process in Burundi, the above questions were addressed by establishing a crosscutting core team to strengthen communication, to ensure quick feedback and to increase emphasis on the local implementation level. Subsequently, the increase in enthusiasm was attributed to this core team, as well as to the platform-led innovation fund that enhanced the flexibility of R4D activities and enabled the introduction of the strongly desired pigs and potatoes. This suggests that a strong linkage between planning and implementation level, an increased focus on implementation level, and the ability of stakeholders involved in implementation to influence this, can indeed trigger energy and interest in the R4D process. In addition, the enthusiasm attributable to the introduction of pigs and potatoes suggests that R4D activities themselves – when successful and desired – can have a similar positive effect on the multi-stakeholder process.

Unfortunately, five months after establishing the core team, the facilitation team realised that the scope of this core team was too limited for it to perform its role of linking stakeholders beyond those directly involved in R4D activities. That is, the networks, communication flows and influencing power of the core team members did not reach the whole range of stakeholders participating in the platforms. Hence, the facilitation team decided to quickly organise additional IP and R4D platform meetings to re-engage their partners. This immediately points to another lesson learned in Humidtropics Burundi, which is that, when different platforms and levels are involved in a multi-stakeholder process, channels of communication should regularly reach all those directly and indirectly involved. If not, additional channels, including platform meetings, lobbying activities and regular updates, should be added to bridge the gaps.

Finally, a challenge mentioned by the R4D platform representative from the University of Burundi is the change of platform members. In different meetings, the fact that often different representatives of the same organisations participate causes delay when they need additional explanation or want to re-do things worked on in previous meetings. Hence, membership of the platform could be a topic for discussion at the start of the platform process.
In summary, although the R4D process is definitely starting to take off and generating more energy in Burundi, there are still challenges along the way.
Bibliography and other sources


Humidtropics (2013, September 3), Workshop report ‘Humidtropics Burundi Field Site’ - Central Highlands (Plateaux Centraux) Region. Meeting minutes.

Humidtropics (2014, June 24), Burundi R4D platform launch meeting report. Meeting minutes.

Humidtropics (2014, June 25), Burundi innovation platform (IP) launch meeting report. Meeting minutes.

Humidtropics (2014, December 1), Strategic planning meeting Team HUBurundi. Meeting minutes.

Humidtropics (2014, December 9), Meeting of core team Carire and Murayi. Meeting minutes.


Humidtropics (2015, March 27), Humidtropics Team Burundi meeting. Meeting minutes.


Interviewees
R4D platform member and professor of agricultural economics - subsection food security, University of Burundi (9 March 2015)
Action Site facilitator Humidtropics Burundi (8 March 2015)
IP facilitator and representative of Reseau Burundi 2000+ (11 March 2015)
ISABU researcher supporting activities under the platform-led innovation fund (9 March 2015)
Four farmers involved in R4D activities (10 March 2015)
Two extension officers involved in R4D activities and core team members (10 March 2015)

Other sources
Event registration forms filled out for learning system, emails, participant lists, photos, participatory observation (November 2014-April 2015) and regular reflection with a WUR PhD student studying the Humidtropics platform process in East and Central Africa and CGIAR researchers involved in Humidtropics Burundi.
The CGIAR Research Program on Integrated Systems for the Humid Tropics (Humidtropics) is an agricultural research for development program led by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). Humidtropics aims for sustainable intensification of agricultural systems to improve the livelihoods of farm households. An important intervention strategy in Humidtropics is the strengthening of multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnerships to achieve development impact. To facilitate that, two types of multi-stakeholder platforms have been established in Burundi: a local level innovation platform to foster participatory experimentation in two communes in Gitega province, and a national research for development platform to bring on board the key scaling actors. Research for development activities in Burundi focus on crop–livestock integration.

Humidtropics, a CGIAR Research Program led by IITA, seeks to transform the lives of the rural poor in tropical America, Asia and Africa. Research organisations involved in core partnership with Humidtropics are AVRDC, Biodiversity International, CIAT, CIP, FARA, icipe, ICRAF, ILRI, IITA, IWMI and WUR.

humidtropics.cgiar.org.

Published by Humidtropics

October 2015. This document is licensed for use under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported Licence.