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


Photography cover: pierivb (Thinkstock)
Other photography by Julie Lunzihirwa, Rachel Zozo, Dieuwke Lamers and Marc Schut.
On a Sunday evening in early July 2015, the national facilitator of Humid tropics DR Congo came home after a long day with an external evaluation team that had come to visit the platforms to report on their progress. He was exhausted. But even stronger than his feelings of fatigue were his feelings of fulfilment. They had achieved a lot, and they had come from far, and he could only be grateful that he was part of the process. About six months before, the members of the multi-stakeholder platforms in DR Congo had expressed feelings of limited satisfaction, but, instead of letting this get to them, they had used this information and turned it into action. They had fought and they had won, and look where they were now. Partners were talking about collaboration, energy levels had risen and a membership committee was finally selected. It was time to harvest the fruits of their earlier investment. It was time to let the multi-stakeholder process show what it is worth!

Dieuwke Lamers, Sylvain Mapatano, Katunga Musale M. D., Julie Lunzihirwa, Rachel Zozo, Chris Okafor, Murat Sartas and Marc Schut

October 2015
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 DR Congo (Box 1), aiming to outline the multi-stakeholder process as it unfolded and highlight lessons that can be learned from this. In DR Congo, activities are mainly taking place in Ngweshe (also referred to as a Field Site), in South Kivu Province in the eastern part of the country. The case study is based on meeting minutes, progress reports, event documentation and 10 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 DR Congo’s biophysical, demographic and institutional context**

With a size slightly less than a quarter of the US, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (henceforth referred to as DR Congo) is the second largest country in Africa. About two-thirds of the country is covered with forest, and it has a tropical climate that becomes more cool and wet towards the mountainous Eastern Highlands. Major environmental problems are deforestation, wildlife poaching and soil erosion (exacerbated by refugees, mainly in the eastern part), water pollution and environmental damage caused by mining (CIA, 2015).

DR Congo has a huge wealth of natural resources including copper, gold, oil and cobalt, but its economy is relatively weak. In 2012, 65% of the population was estimated to live below the poverty line, and in 2010 child labour was estimated at 42% among children between 5 and 14 years old. The total population of DR Congo reached 79.4 million (median age 17.9 years) in 2015. Over the last years, DR Congo’s economy has slowly been recovering, but it remains hindered by decades of corruption, countrywide instability, lack of transparent government policy, an uncertain legal framework and conflicts that have reduced national output, increased the country’s debts and prevented much private sector development. In addition, the poor infrastructure – in 2004 less than 2% of the 153,497km of roadways was paved – makes transportation a challenge (CIA, 2015).

Since its independence in 1960, there has been an abundance of political and social instability and violence (CIA, 2015).

The region within DR Congo where Humidtropics is active is eastern South Kivu Province, Walungu territoire, Ngweshe collectivité. Activities are undertaken in four groupements: Mushinga, Mulamba, Lubona and Burhale (Figure 1 and Photo 1).
How multi-stakeholder processes in DR Congo contribute to achieving Humidtropics’ intermediate development outcomes (IDOs)

IDO 1: Increase income for rural households
“Members of the innovation platform are re-investing money earned from collective management of land to expand their activities and increase their income.”

IDO 2: Better nutrition for rural households
“Integrating nutritious crops like beans in cassava cropping systems contributes to improved nutrition.”

IDO 3: Increase farm productivity
“Fertiliser usage is relatively unusual in the area, but innovation platform members successfully demonstrated its benefits for increasing crop production.”

IDO 4: Sustainable natural resource management
“Forage hedges are being planted to combat soil erosion.”

IDO 5: Empowered women and youth
“The research for development platform facilitated collaboration between young agripreneurs, research organisations and an NGO to conduct a joint market study.”

IDO 6: Enhanced innovation capacity
“Innovation platform members have successfully encouraged the Minister of Agriculture to support them in tackling the problem of lack of fertiliser. She will provide 2,000$ worth of inputs.”
The initiation of the multi-stakeholder process in DR Congo

Launching the program and deciding where to work

To facilitate the multi-stakeholder processes in DR Congo, Platform Diobass in Kivu – an NGO working on facilitating exchange between different social actors to address concrete problems in rural areas – was selected. The coordinator of Diobass accepted the role of national facilitator.

On 23 and 24 May 2013, a two-day workshop was organised in Bukavu (the capital of South Kivu Province) to launch Humidtropics in DR Congo (Photo 2). On the first day, the program, its development objectives, its launch in East and Central Africa and the potential Field Sites were discussed. Subsequently, participants broke up into thematic groups relating to the program’s objectives to discuss opportunities, constraints, Entry Themes and relevant partners. On the second day, participants split up into groups relating to the three sites selected to prioritise Entry Themes and to discuss how to integrate these with existing initiatives, which actors they needed to assure good results and what the next steps should be. The group work was followed by a plenary discussion and agreement on the next steps.

“During the launch, when we had those meetings, Humidtropics was like a philosophical concept. It was not – even the R4D platform concept – was not well-understood (...) even understanding what Humidtropics was compared to other programs; it is not like a crop-based program, it is not an association, it is not intercropping, it is a system. But that concept of systems was difficult.”

IITA researcher (18 November 2014)

Although the program had officially started, it first remained difficult for the people involved to really understand it. Unlike other projects, it was not immediately clear what activities would be implemented. Also, some of the key concepts like ‘systems research’ and ‘multi-stakeholder platforms’ were relatively new and abstract to the people involved. In the months following the launch, the national facilitator and scientists from IITA and other CGIAR centres conducted many informal meetings to really internalise the program’s approach and sensitise potential partners to see if they were willing to participate. In addition, larger meetings were organised. For example in June 2013, NGOs and other organisations working in the domain of agriculture were brought together to discuss what each one was doing, inform them about the
platforms and explore synergies. Overall, central questions addressed in this period were where exactly to start activities, which Entry Themes to focus on and who would participate.

On 22 and 23 November 2013, a diverse group of interested stakeholders, including research organisations, NGOs and extension agents, visited Mushinga and Bukunda villages – both located in South Kivu. During this visit, the group conducted individual interviews and a focus group discussion with farmers to understand farming practices, room for improvement and their main challenges and opportunities. Using this information, subgroups of researchers wrote two concept notes: one focusing on the Entry Theme ‘Improvement of Cassava-Grain Legumes Production Systems through Livestock Integration’ for Mushinga, and the other focusing on the Entry Theme ‘Improvement of Banana-Beans Farming Systems through Livestock Integration’ for Bukunda. The concept notes were later discussed with the whole group.

**Jointly and systematically identifying constraints and Entry Points**

Building on the two Entry Themes, a Rapid Appraisal of Agricultural Innovation Systems (RAAIS – Schut et al., 2015) workshop was organised on 28 February 2014 at the IITA research station in Kalambo (Box 2 and Photo 3). During this workshop, different stakeholder groups’ major challenges and constraints relating to the Entry Themes were identified and translated into more concrete Entry Points for sustainable intensification of the agricultural system in South Kivu.

**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).
Twenty-two people participated, representing the five major stakeholder groups in agricultural R4D: farmers, NGOs, government, the private sector and research. Generally, researchers and NGOs were somewhat overrepresented, as were the male participants (82%). Participants were first asked to list their five most important challenges and constraints individually, then in homogeneous stakeholder groups and finally with the whole group. Overall, constraints mentioned were predominantly of an economic or institutional nature (Schut and Hinnou, 2014) (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Productivity</th>
<th>NRM</th>
<th>Institutional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No access to the high quality inputs for crops and livestock due to low household income</td>
<td>No respect for farming calendar</td>
<td>Poor collaboration between actors, organisations and projects in the agricultural sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient germoplasm and inputs (for crops and livestock)</td>
<td>Limited impact of agricultural innovations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seed quality</td>
<td></td>
<td>No access to agricultural credit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Official launching of the R4D platform and the IP**

On 19 March 2014, 13 interested partners joined a stakeholder meeting where they were updated on the program’s activities, including the RAAIS workshop and two ECA Flagship meetings attended by some of the participating partners. On the basis of one of these regional meetings, the national facilitator had developed a list of next steps. These included the official establishment of one subnational (provincial) R4D platform and two local IPs, the writing of proposals to apply to donors for funding and the implementation of activities once the IPs were established. Hence, participating stakeholders started discussing how to go about these activities and developed a calendar for the remainder of 2014. Again, they talked about potential Field Sites as some wanted to expand whereas others preferred not to spread available resources too thinly. The provisional decision taken was to keep to the two sites visited in November 2013 for now, and two partners were selected to each identify local stakeholders in these sites. Later on, it was decided to work only in one Field Site: Mushinga.

On 3 April 2014 – directly following a capacity development workshop in Kenya to train participants on multi-stakeholder platform establishment – the first IP in DR Congo was launched in Mushinga. A delegation of key actors participating in Humidtropics went to Mushinga to meet with a variety of local stakeholders. They talked about crops
commonly grown in Mushinga that could potentially generate money, including challenges relating to these and to agricultural more generally. The IP concept and experiences with IPs in Rwanda were presented, and local stakeholders were asked about their willingness to become involved with the IP. Participants committed, were requested to contact other relevant stakeholders and agreed to meet again on 15 April.

On 15 April, 37 people participated in the first official meeting of the IP that called itself Chokola IP (‘the saviour’ in the local language). They ranged from farmers (the largest group), to researchers, landowners, private sector representatives and a medical doctor and jointly agreed on the vision ‘to produce a lot in order to earn much money and improve their livelihood conditions.’ They discussed the previous launch meeting and further specified the cropping systems of focus, including challenges and knowledge gaps relating to these, including relations between production and for example fertiliser usage or spacing. Subsequently, an action plan was developed for 2014, and the option of engaging with landowners was discussed to tackle the IP’s challenge in relation to accessing land. Lastly, it was mentioned that, in order to organise themselves well as a platform, they needed to work on internal platform rules, and a list of topics to be covered in these rules was presented. Then, a committee was selected to start working on the internal rules on 25 April 2014.

The official launch of the R4D platform took place on 25 April 2014 in Bukavu (Photo 4). The event brought together 18 partners, most of whom had already been kept in the loop and had participated in earlier stakeholder meetings, informal encounters relating to the program and/or (field) activities. Of these 18 partners, slightly more than half represented research organisations and the remainder came from NGOs, universities and government. During this launch, the program, the platform concept and how these two related to other existing structures in the region was explained. For example, other research projects (Box 3) and a sectorial committee established by the government that also brings together stakeholders in agriculture but has a less strong research focus. Subsequently, as in discussions at the IP level, the need for internal rules for platform organisation was stressed, and a committee of four people was selected to work on these and bring them to the next platform meeting. Unfortunately, this turned out to be a lengthy process which ended up for a long time on the shelf.

**BOX 3 Existing projects and platform-led R4D activities**

When Humidtropics started in South Kivu, there were already other projects and partners active in the targeted Field Site and which became part of the R4D platform or the IP. These
projects have their own objectives and activities but partner with Humidtropics on overlapping areas, thereby influencing the program and the multi-stakeholder process.

**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 South Kivu. It is currently led by the CGIAR centres IITA and Bioversity International in collaboration with national research institutes. CIALCA used to focus on improving the 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.

**Support to Agricultural Research for Development of Strategic Crops in Africa (SARD-SC)** is a CGIAR-led research program that aims to enhance food security and nutrition and contribute to reducing poverty in different countries in Africa, among which DR Congo. In doing so, it focuses in particular on increasing the productivity and profitability of cassava, maize, rice and wheat.

**N2Africa** is an R4D project that aims to increase the benefits of nitrogen fixation for smallholder farmers in Africa by testing and promoting effective grain legume technologies. It is led by Wageningen University and the CGIAR centres IITA and ILRI.

**LegumeCHOICE** is a CGIAR-led research project that aims to exploit the benefits of multi-purpose legumes in order to improve food security and nutrition, reduce poverty and enhance smallholder farmers’ production environment. Its aim is to provide knowledge and tools to farmers and development partners about legumes as a source of e.g. food, protein, animal feed and fuel.

**Food for the Hungry (FH)** is a Christian international NGO that works with churches, leaders and families in order to reduce all forms of poverty and hunger. Its key domains of focus are education, health and nutrition, livelihood and disaster risk reduction.

**The International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC)** is a public international organisation that aims to increase and sustain food security and agricultural production through developing and transmitting crop nutrient technologies and agribusiness expertise. It combines research and development with training and education. In the Humidtropics Field Site, IFDC has for example been promoting the use of fertilisers and how best to combine them with organic manure.

**PAD** is a local NGO based in Lubona that tries to organise farmers. It is linked to many farmer groups in the region and assists them for example in collective marketing or getting access to credit through micro-finance institutions like PAIDEK.
How the process continued

Planning and proposal writing in Bukavu

In the month following its official launch, the R4D platform did not meet as a platform. Instead, two small subcommittees of R4D platform members met a couple of times. One of the subcommittees worked on the platform’s internal rules, and the other subcommittee developed a proposal to attract platform-led innovation funding (also known as ‘Cluster 4’ – Box 4). This proposal, based on the outcomes of the February 2014 RAAIS workshop, was submitted for funding at the end of May 2014.

Subsequently, the R4D platform met again as a whole on 17 June 2014. The main agenda items for this meeting were the integration of gender in R4D activities and – after consultation with different organisations to explain how they work on this issue – nomination of a gender focal point. The women’s NGO SARCAF was selected as the R4D platform’s gender focal point. In addition, some partners working in or around Mushinga presented their activities, providing an opportunity for harmonising activities or jointly writing a proposal.

On 29 July 2014, the R4D platform met again to plan activities for the upcoming planting season, identify lead partners and list additional partners that could assist in implementation. Platform members split up into groups relating to major themes of focus identified (e.g. nutrition, improved banana systems and so on – Photo 5) and elaborated action plans that could be implemented using either the platform-led innovation fund or funds from other projects partnering with Humidtropics (Box 3). At the end of the meeting, preliminary action plans were presented, and designated lead partners would continue working on them. Moreover, it was announced that the initial proposal for platform-led innovation funding that had been developed by one of the small subcommittees still required some improvement. Hence, additional people were selected to look into this.

The next R4D platform meeting took place on 29 August 2014 to continue planning activities for the upcoming planting season, starting approximately mid-September. During this meeting, some of the Themes and activities derived from the previous R4D platform meeting were merged on the advice of some of the researchers. However, because the lead partners and most of the project leaders were not present, the note-taker indicated this as a difficult task.

The following day, the plans agreed upon in the R4D platform were presented in an IP meeting (Photo 6) that – according to one of the researchers – generally accepted them without proposing major ad-
justments. Hence, the group continued to select varieties and farmers, and to plan other practicalities relating to the implementation of trials.

In September 2014, the implementation of planned R4D activities took off, starting with banana-legume intercropping trials in Mushinga established by a team of IP members and Food for the Hungry in collaboration with IITA researchers, using project funds. In October 2014, other R4D activities targeting the multiplication of forage seeds and the integrated cassava-legume system were implemented in Mushinga and Mulamba by IP members, the national research institute INERA (Institut National pour l’Etude et la Recherche Agronomique) and three students from the Evangelical University in Africa (EUA). Both used platform-led innovation funding.

**BOX 4 Activities under the platform-led innovation fund**

To stimulate flexibility and demand-driven R4D, a platform-led innovation fund (also known as ‘Cluster 4’), to be led by the multi-stakeholder platform as a whole, was provided by Humidtropics. Next, to take the lead in implementing activities under this platform-led funding in DR Congo, the national research institute INERA was selected. Based on input from the RAAIS workshop and IP and R4D platform members, the main objective of these activities was formulated as the ‘Improvement of Cassava-Grain Legumes Production Systems through Livestock Integration.’

**Cassava and bean intercropping trials, with forage hedges**

Nine on-farm intercropping trials with cassava (Sawasawa) and bean (HM21) were established in Mushinga, Lubona and Mulamba in October 2014, each showing four different fertilisation treatments – resp. only cattle manure, only chemical fertiliser (NPK), both cattle manure and chemical fertiliser (NPK), and without fertiliser. At the top, middle and bottom of each of the nine trial areas, forage hedges were planted to select best fit and yielding options regarding erosion control, productivity and animal feed. For cassava, data were collected on the growth rate, diameter to the collar, plant height, occupied area, rate of chlorophyll and yield. For beans, data were collected for growth rate, number of flowers, rate of chlorophyll, biomass, number of pods and yield.

In the next planting season, again 12 cassava and bean intercropping trials were established.

**Evaluation of best-yield forages**

In order to control soil erosion while simultaneously producing animal feed, experiments testing different grass and legume forage crops were established in October 2014. For grasses, five trials have been established, each comparing three different varieties (local *Pennisetum purpureum*, *Pennisetum purpureum* cultivar French Cameroon and *Tripsacum andersonii*). For legumes, four trials have been established, each compar-
ing four different varieties (Canavalia brasiliensis, Desmodium uncinatum, Lablab purpureus (22759, 21603)). Data collection focuses on growth rate, yield production and nutritive value. Participatory farmer evaluation was organised to assess the different technologies tested (Photo 7).

In addition to these trials, farmer field schools demonstrating the cassava and bean intercropping trial as well as multiplication fields for both cassava and the forage crops have been established in collaboration with IP members.

In an interview, the INERA researcher responsible for coordinating activities under the platform-led innovation fund explained about his struggle to assure scientific rigour within the setting of the trials. One of the causes, as he explained, was the availability of resources. On the one hand, these were too limited to spend a lot of time in the field controlling his experiments; this required him to rely on supervision during critical moments (e.g. planting, harvest) and besides this engage with students who are still learning and sometimes make mistakes. On the other hand, the resources were sometimes delayed, thereby causing delays in fieldwork (e.g. late planting). Another cause, he explained, had to do with working with farmers. He acknowledged the benefit of working with farmers as the first step in dissemination and training, but he also mentioned that when farmers are given part of the responsibility for managing the trials (e.g. weeding, harvesting/data collection) this does not always happen with the same precision as intended. That is, a farmer’s primary aim is to have a good harvest from all his/her fields, rather than to know the exact figures for which part of the yield originates from which part of the plot. Likewise, one of the IITA researchers explained that the presence of many projects/interventions in the same place – even the same farm – also complicates the attribution of impact to any single intervention.

Overall, according to the national facilitator, the period from the launch of the R4D platform to the implementation of trials was marked by the development of protocols, the planning of activities and the identification of actors to implement the activities. Moreover, even after the trials had started, revisions still had to be made based on regional (ECA) meetings conducted in August 2014, November 2014 and January 2015. These meetings provided additional input to improve the initial proposals written. Nevertheless, although adjustments had to be made, big changes were no longer possible as the fieldwork had already started. Also, rather than the R4D platform as a whole working on the changes, it was mainly the people involved in implementation who did so – like scientists from CGIAR and INERA, universities or other project leaders. Hence, in this period many small meetings and other forms of interaction took place between these R4D platform members, which one of the researchers from IITA referred to as a very lengthy and inefficient process. According to
the national facilitator, it even contributed to delays in planting as the lead researcher for the platform-led innovation fund was simultaneously occupied with proposal development, planning fieldwork and filling in required reporting templates.

After the field activities were finally established, the R4D platform met twice again in November 2014. During these meetings, the members worked on developing one overarching plan of work and budget for 2015 for the platform-led innovation fund and the projects mapped against Humidtropics. The first time, they met on 3 November 2014 to make an inventory of all ongoing activities. These were presented by the national facilitator during a regional workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, on 6-7 November 2014. Subsequently, on 21 November 2014, the R4D platform met again to finalise the work plans for 2015 based on feedback received. Besides these two R4D platform meetings, the national facilitator and the other program coordinators also worked individually on the work and budget plan to make them as comprehensive and detailed as possible.

Field trials and collective action on the ground
During that same period – from April 2014 onwards – activities at Field Site level were also starting up. Chokola IP first developed and adopted its internal rules in June 2014, which included a monthly contribution of $3 from each member to a joint IP account. Subsequently, the IP started discussing what it could do as a platform to work on its objective of earning money. Inspired by the advice given during the launch of the IP, the members decided in June 2014 to visit one of the local landowners and ask him if they could use his land. They succeeded, and the landowner offered them three hectares of land, which for the time being was free of charge.

According to the IP secretary and the IP’s focal person, who both participated from the start of the IP process, 12 IP members took responsibility for cultivating the three hectares of land offered by the landowner. They pooled $650 and paid for external labourers and the inputs required for cultivation. After preparing the first hectare in August 2014, in October 2014 they planted a replica of the cassava-bean intercropping system for which demonstration plots had been established by the R4D platform members INERA and EUA. Around February/March 2015, they cultivated the second hectare; this time with cassava only, re-investing the money earned by selling the beans harvested from the first hectare cultivated. The IP plans to plant maize on the third of the three hectares, starting in September 2015 (Figure 2).
Besides the 12 IP members earning money from cultivating these three hectares, other IP members sometimes voluntarily worked on this big IP field to demonstrate to the external labourers how best to take care of the land and the crops. In addition, some IP members also had small plots of spare land themselves, which they decided to put at the service of the IP. Profit coming from these small IP plots as well as from the three hectares of land would benefit the joint IP account, according to the IP secretary. On all these IP fields (Figure 2), IP members started replicating technologies that had been introduced by the different projects in their region. For those planting replicas of the cassava-bean trial under the platform-led innovation fund, the responsible INERA researcher explained that R4D platform members had provided the IP with cassava cuttings and bean seeds. The agreement was that the IP would later on return the equivalent of seeds received and that they would take care of other inputs themselves. Also, occasionally researchers visited the smaller IP fields to see if all was going well.

As part of their internal rules, IP members decided to meet monthly; usually each second Friday of the month. The IP secretary and the IP’s local focal person explained that the meetings are generally organised by the IP itself, bringing together the IP president (a physician), local authorities, development agents, a policeman, traders and farmers, of different age and gender groups. Sometimes, R4D platform members or other visitors also participate in IP meetings, e.g. to discuss research plans. Generally, most meetings include an update about the previous meeting, discussion about how things are going in the field, planning or adjusting upcoming agricultural activities and sometimes discussion about the IP’s common cashbook or members’ contributions. Moreover, IP members who have participated in other Humid-
tropics activities, e.g. R4D platform meetings, provide updates, and after most IP meetings the members visit their lands to actually see how things are going.

Around January/February 2015, the IP engaged with a micro-finance institute called PAIDEK to apply for a loan. According to the IP secretary, the money pooled by the 12 IP members – used to cultivate the three hectares of land – was supposed to be matched by other IP members and partly used to apply for a loan at the start of the process. This, however, never happened. So, when the IP approached PAIDEK in January/February 2015, it found out that it had already missed the period in which PAIDEK provides credit and also that it did not meet all the criteria for applying.

An important moment for the IP took place on 9 May 2015 when the Minister of Agriculture for South Kivu Province visited Mushinga (Photo 8). She participated in an IP meeting and visited some trials showing different intercropping systems that use chemical fertiliser and manure. According to some people who were present, the minister was very impressed with what she saw. IP members explained to her about the positive impact on production they had witnessed in the trials and also that they currently faced a challenge of accessing sufficient fertiliser in their region. In response, the minister promised to help and provide $2000 to support this good initiative. Subsequently, a small committee was appointed to identify the kind of fertilisers needed, and the minister tasked the IP to find the poorest farmers so that these could be the beneficiaries of these inputs. In return, the IP members should show the minister that her investment resulted in higher production.

A wake-up call that boosted the R4D platform process

On 15 and 16 January 2015, Humidtropics platform reflection workshops were organised with the IP and the R4D platform to facilitate platform members’ reflection on the process and achievements so far (Figure 3). The workshops built on the theory of change – the impact pathway – as explicated in the Humidtropics philosophy ([humidtropics.cgiar.org/impact-pathway](http://humidtropics.cgiar.org/impact-pathway)). Moreover, it built on the major constraints of stakeholder groups and sites as identified during RAAIS (Schut and Hinnou, 2014). The workshop included joint reflection on a questionnaire filled out individually, visual (sub)group exercises and discussions. Subsequently, a small group of key people involved in the platforms – including the national facilitator, CGIAR researchers and the platforms’ gender and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) focal person – sat down to discuss the implications of what members had mentioned during the reflection workshops.
In DR Congo, these reflection workshops functioned as a wake-up call, showing that the multi-stakeholder process was not going as well as had been hoped. For example, the level of satisfaction and benefits were generally not perceived as very high. This was explained, among other things, by the high expectations that were not met (e.g. access to funding for activities), poor communication and poor involvement of members in activities other than platform meetings, and the lack of clarity about the R4D platform, its benefits and synergies to expect from it. Also, members’ roles and responsibilities as well as their interests were generally unknown (Lamers et al., 2015). Together, the R4D platform members decided they would work on improving this.

“Many of the platform members come from organisations that do not have a lot of resources, so this was also an opportunity for them to work with bigger organisations and projects and through this perhaps get some facilities or become more active themselves. (...) But then it turned out to be mainly meetings and even those from leading institutions sometimes went abroad for meetings and presented about this. This can create confusion; how can you have money for meetings but not for activities on the ground?"

National facilitator (6 July 2015)

In the following R4D platform meeting on 30 January 2015, the platform members reviewed and focused on the major challenges identified in the reflection workshops, discussed their expectations and what they could offer to the platform. The partly finished internal rules were taken down from the shelf and members continued working on these, elaborating among other things membership modalities and the general functioning of the platform. As the task proved too big to finish in plenary session, the R4D platform selected a small committee of active members to finalise the rules on the basis of the input from the whole platform. At the end of the meeting, one of the scientists presented about the activities implemented with the IP in collaboration with CIALCA – one of the projects mapped into Humidtropics. Also, members were given a table with Humidtropics’ major domains of impact and asked to list their activities on this to visualise how each one contributed to the platform’s overall goals.

“We kept on reflecting on what could be the reason why we had those results. And we tried to see what we could do to make sure that people would become more interested. (...) This is from where we pushed to have an R4D platform committee and to make sure that there are some responsibilities between members.”

National facilitator (6 July 2015)
On 13 February 2015, the R4D platform met again (Photo 9), expecting to adopt their internal rules. However, this was postponed because the committee working on it was incomplete that day and had not finished them yet. Instead, the members talked about action plans for the platform’s major domains of impact (e.g. gender, markets, agricultural productivity) and selected subcommittees to work on these. Some of these subcommittees later successfully submitted a budget to Humidtropics and participated in the resultant activities. The NGO SARCAF, for example, which was part of the gender group, assisted with gender training conducted on 7 May 2015 in Mushinga.

No further R4D platform meetings were organised until 15 May 2015 (Photo 10). On that day, the R4D platform was informed about an external delegation that would soon visit the platform and its Field Site to evaluate the program’s achievements so far; but, most importantly, the R4D platform officially adopted its internal rules and selected a leadership committee for the platform.

In the following month, two R4D platform meetings were organised, on respectively 9 and 23 June, to prepare the platform for the upcoming evaluation on 4-6 July 2015.

**Partners exploring synergies on the ground and restructuring the IP**

While the R4D platform was working on the challenges identified in January 2015, Chokola IP also went through an important change. A key moment in this happened on 8 May 2015, the day following the gender training session in Mushinga, when two CGIAR researchers (one working on Humidtropics documentation and the other working for the N2Africa project - Box 3), a local NGO working on collective marketing and farmer organisation (PAD), and the local micro-finance institution (PAIDEK) visited farmers in Mushinga and neighbouring groupements. All these farmers were engaging with at least one of the partners represented in the R4D platform, but not all of them were part of the IP. Hence, the group discussed how to involve these farmers more in Chokola IP and its activities. It was decided to organise another meeting with Chokola IP and all farmers and R4D platform partners actively involved in projects in the region to jointly discuss this issue. During the R4D platform meeting of 15 May 2015, this plan was announced, and platform members involved in project implementation in and around Mushinga were invited to join this ‘IP meeting with partners’ on 28 May 2015 (Photo 11).

At the start of this meeting, the national facilitator talked about the program and strategies of synergies. Next, according to the documentation person for Humidtropics, the group openly brainstormed about potential synergies and ways in which they could work togeth-
er. The group decided many things like that they would meet again in August 2015 and jointly plan activities for the planting season of September 2015. They would try to harmonise protocols and messages communicated to the farmers and promote awareness among everyone about what would happen in the region that season. Moreover, plans were made to restructure the IP (originally located in Mushinga) to make it more inclusive of nearby groupements in which R4D platform partners had activities or IP members were living. The groupements targeted were Mushinga, Lubona, Burhale and Mulamba, and about 10 IP members were selected to represent these four in an expanded IP committee (Figure 4). These 10 people met again on 4 June 2015 to decide who would fulfil which role within their committee, and on 23 June 2015 they came to an R4D platform meeting to introduce themselves.

“At the moment there is a lot of enthusiasm about the future collaboration. Of course it is now still mainly by talking, but at the beginning of the planting season it will be really visible, when they start planning together. Then we can evaluate if there is real collaboration. But I think it will be real!”

IITA staff member (8 July 2015)
According to the IP secretary, the IP organised different meetings for local leaders in Lubona, Burale and Mulamba in the second week of July 2015 to sensitise them about Humidtropics and Chokola IP. Anyone interested in participating could help establish four local sub-IPs in their groupements to make up the expanded Chokola IP. Box 5 presents an overview of research for development events under Humidtropics in Dr Congo.

**BOX 5 Overview of R4D events under Humidtropics in DR Congo**

**23-24 May 2013**
Launch Humidtropics DR Congo. The program and its aim are explained and participants split up into groups: first, to discuss challenges, opportunities, Entry Themes and potential partners relevant to the program’s objectives; second, to prioritise nominated Themes on the basis of their relevance to three selected Field Sites and discuss how to link this to existing initiatives.

**June 2013**
Meeting in Mont Kahuzi Hotel with NGOs and other organisations in the domain of agriculture. Participants talk about their activities, about Humidtropics and who would like to participate.

**August - October 2013**
Informal meetings among main actors implementing the program, and between these people and potential partners. Main issues are: understanding the program better, sensitising partners, deciding on potential sites, Entry Themes and partners.

**22 and 23 November 2013**
Field visit to Mushinga and Bukunda villages to explore the area and talk to farmers about what they are doing, where they can improve and what their main challenges and opportunities are. From this, a subgroup of researchers writes a concept note focusing on the identified Entry Themes: ‘Improvement of Cassava-Grain Legumes Production Systems through Livestock Integration’ for Mushinga and ‘Improvement of Banana-Beans Farming Systems through Livestock Integration’ for Bukunda.

**28 February 2014**
RAAIS workshop. Split up into five different stakeholder groups – farmers, NGOs, the private sector, government and research –, people discuss and prioritise their main challenges and constraints, as well as those in the area, and formulate identification of concrete Entry Points for productivity, NRM and institutional innovation on this basis.

**19 March 2014**
Preliminary FAO/ R4D platform meeting where the national facilitator talks about the need to establish a national and two local platforms, write proposals and start implementation of activities once these platforms are established. An action plan is developed and the Field Sites are again discussed.
3 April 2014
IP launch meeting in Mushinga. Participants discuss commonly grown crops that can generate money, challenges relating to these crops and agriculture in Mushinga more generally, and the IP concept. Participants commit to becoming involved with the IP and to contacting other relevant stakeholders.

15 April 2014
IP meeting. Members formulate the IP’s vision, further specify cropping system of focus and develop an action plan, including developing the IP’s internal rules. A list of topics to be addressed in these rules is mentioned.

25 April 2014
IP members work on internal rules and regulations (including the platform’s vision, membership rules, rights and obligations, and mode of operation).

25 April 2014
Official R4D platform launch in Bukavu. Although members have been meeting before, this is their official launch meeting. The program, the R4D platform and how this relates to other existing structures is explained. Then they discuss the issue of making internal bylaws and working on a concept note for activities, and subcommittees are selected for both.

May 2014
Start of situation analysis; one R4D platform subcommittee works on proposal for platform-led funding that is submitted at the end of the month; and another R4D platform subcommittee works on the platform’s internal bylaws, which they do not finish.

June 2014
IP adopts internal rules and visits landowner to request land. It succeeds and gets access to three hectares of land – for the time being free of charge.

17 June 2014
R4D platform meeting to discuss integration of gender in activities; the NGO and female organisation SARCAF is selected as the platform’s gender focal point. Also, some other (CGIAR research) programs present their action plans and propose additional dates to continue the discussion.

29 July 2014
R4D platform meeting to discuss activities for the upcoming planting season and select organisations/people to lead and implement this (Photo 12). Action plans are developed relating to the main domains of focus identified (e.g. nutrition, markets, improved banana systems); team leaders will finish these action plans after the R4D platform meeting.

29 August 2014
R4D platform meeting to continue discussing plans for the upcoming planting season. Some activities discussed on 29 July are merged.
30 August 2014
IP meeting to present and validate the plans for the upcoming planting season. The IP generally accepts them without big changes and they plan implementation of trials.

July/August 2014
IP starts preparing first of the three hectares of land received from the landowner.

September 2014
Implementation of banana-bean intercropping trials in Mushinga by IP members and the NGO Food of the Hungry in partnership with IITA.

October 2014
Implementation of forage multiplication and cassava-bean intercropping trials in Mushinga and Mulamba by IP members, the national research institute INERA and students from the Evangelical University in Africa, using the platform-led funding.

October/November 2014
After establishment of the cassava-bean intercropping trial, IP members plant a replica of this system on the first of the three hectares of land obtained from the landowner.

3 November 2014
R4D platform meeting to discuss what the platform is working on through its platform-led funding. A few days later, the national facilitator – on behalf of the platform – participates in a regional meeting aimed at developing an overarching action plan for 2015 that lists the R4D platform’s work and that of individual organisations/projects involved in the R4D platform in relation to the Humidtropics objectives. In addition, members discuss development of an M&E plan and select a team to support the M&E focal person.

21 November 2014
R4D platform meeting to continue working on the overarching action plan for 2015 and integrate feedback given in the regional meeting for the activities under the platform-led funding.

9 January 2015
M&E focal person organises a meeting to update the M&E tools. Members of M&E sub-committee of R4D platform, the national facilitator and IITA staff participate.

15, 16 and 19 January 2015
Humidtropics platform reflection meetings with respectively the IP (Photo 13), the R4D platform and a small group of active partners (Diobass, IITA, SARCAF and INERA). During these meetings, the platforms indicate relatively low levels of satisfaction and start brainstorming about potential reasons and ways to improve this.

January 2015
Data collection and legume harvesting from cassava-legume intercropping trials.
January 2015
IP meeting to evaluate previous season and plan the next season.

30 January 2015
R4D platform meeting to discuss and focus on the insights gained in the Humidtropics platform reflection meeting, list members’ expectations and ways each one can contribute to the platform. R4D platform members re-engage in a discussion on their internal rules and appoint a subcommittee to finalise these (INERA, SARCAF, SENASEM and IITA). In the months following, this subcommittee meets twice to complete its task.

January/February 2015
IP meets with micro-finance institution PAIDEK and applies for loan. This does not succeed as the IP at that moment does not meet all criteria and is too late applying.

13 February 2015
R4D platform meeting to brainstorm on action plans and select subcommittees to work on these. In the end, only some of these subcommittees receive funding after submitting a budget to IITA.

February 2015
IP cultivates the second of its three hectares of land, this time planting only cassava.

February/March 2015
Second round of planting under the platform-led funding, 16 participatory trials are established using an updated protocol with an increased systems orientation. Also, from December 2014 onwards, many small meetings are conducted between IITA and INERA scientists to update the protocols. Other projects active in the region also establish new trials.

March/April 2015
Participatory farmer evaluation of first planting season conducted with the IP, IITA and INERA.

6 May 2015
M&E subcommittee consisting of INERA, IITA, Diobass, ADVS and university representatives meets at IITA office to discuss M&E plan, modalities and tools.

7 May 2015
Gender capacity building workshop organised for IP and field partners that builds on a regional gender training session on 24-27 March attended by IITA and SARCAF. Both IITA and SARCAF assist the IP training.

8 May 2015
Small group consisting of IITA (Humidtropics and N2Africa), PAIDEK and PAD visit farmers in and around Mushinga who are involved in activities of R4D platform members. They
discuss options for involving these farmers in the IP and its activities and decide to organise another meeting with all partners in the field.

15 May 2015
R4D platform meeting to adopt the platform’s internal rules and select a management committee.

May 2015
The Minister of Agriculture for South Kivu Province visits Mushinga to see the IP and some of the ongoing R4D activities. She is impressed and promises to support the platform by supplying $2,000 worth of inputs.

28 May 2015
IP meeting with field partners (project leaders) to openly brainstorm for options to strengthen collaboration and synergies. It is decided to organise a joint planning meeting with all field partners in August 2015. It is also decided to change the organisation of the IP by creating sub-IPs in each of the four groupements involved in R4D platform members’ activities (Mushinga, Burhale, Lubona and Mulamba) and create one expanded IP committee that links the four.

May/April 2015
Local technician is hired by Diobass and IFDC to assist in the process on the ground linked to the trials.

4 June 2015
Around 10 IP members who will become the expanded IP committee of the four sub-IPs meet to discuss who will take which role within their committee.

9 June 2015
R4D platform meeting to discuss and prepare the visit of an external committee that will evaluate the program. In addition, the R4D platform is updated about the results of the baseline analysis started in May 2014, and the newly established expanded IP committee presents itself.

23 June 2015
R4D platform meeting to continue preparing the upcoming evaluation.

June 2015
Second round of bean harvesting from the cassava-bean intercropping trials.

4-6 July 2015
External committee visits Humidtropics DR Congo to evaluate the current state of the program.
Facilitation team

As already mentioned, the role of national facilitator of Humidtropics in DR Congo is fulfilled by the coordinator of the NGO Platform Diobass. At the beginning of the process, he – together with CGIAR scientists working for Humidtropics – mainly spent his time organising launch meetings, strategising about how to implement the program, identifying and sensitising potential partners about the program and the platforms, participating in regional meetings organised by the program coordinators, and facilitating the establishment of the R4D platform and the IP. In addition, when R4D platform meetings need to be organised, the national facilitator usually invites members for the meeting, prepares and facilitates these meetings and backstops subcommittees or individual R4D platform members appointed for certain tasks. When talking about his own main activities, the national facilitator mentioned as his most important tasks: linking members and facilitating open exchange of information between them all; identifying and sensitising new members that might be interested in contributing, or able to contribute, to the program; being the link between the platform and the researchers from outside.

“The key element of what we are doing is to facilitate communication and exchange of information. (...) We are convinced that everybody has something to offer. So what we have to do is to create conditions where all people can be able to express themselves, independent of social status, class and so on. I think that is the key issue: how do we make sure that the different categories working together can be able to say what they know?”

National facilitator about supporting the multi-stakeholder process (6 July 2015)

Besides the national facilitator, other people have been highly involved in facilitating the multi-stakeholder processes in DR Congo. Initially, these were mainly two people from IITA: the ECA Flagship manager who often reflected on strategies together with the national facilitator and his colleague working on M&E and documentation. Later on, the composition of the group changed and expanded as additional scientists were being hired by IITA to backstop the research in the platform and to conduct the baseline study. Besides IITA staff, other CGIAR and non-CGIAR R4D platform partners became more active over time as they started activities under Humidtropics. Bioversity International, for example, conducted a gender study and started research on scaling innovations, and the head of livestock within INERA was appointed as the manager of the platform-led innovation fund. Moreover, two R4D platform members became focal person for, respectively, gender (the NGO SARCAF in June 2014) and M&E (a scientist from INERA in October 2014). All these people, in relation
to their respective responsibilities, became more actively involved in planning, implementing and facilitating parts of the process. And finally, in May 2015, an R4D platform committee was selected consisting of a chairperson, a vice-chairperson and a secretary, who jointly would take over part of the facilitating role of the national facilitator during R4D platform meetings (Photo 10).

“As chairperson of the R4D platform, I and the other committee members spend more time on the platform. We help to make things move forward, prepare meetings, reflect on the platform process, follow up on some agreed-upon activities and so on. And for this we also meet as a committee.”

R4D platform chairperson (9 July 2015)

At IP level, the role of the national facilitator is less intensive, because this platform is rather self-organised, even using its own resources. A chairperson has been appointed, as well as a local focal person and a secretary who help facilitate the IP process. Among other things, they are involved in inviting IP members for meetings, writing minutes, collecting information at local level and communicating this to the persons concerned in the R4D platform, and facilitating the establishment of the sub-IPs as decided in May 2015. According to the secretary, he and the local focal person were also involved in sensitising stakeholders about the program around its initial launch in Mushinga.

Nevertheless, the national facilitator liaises frequently with key members in the IP. Moreover, together with some R4D platform members, he signed a contract with a local technician working on some of their trials to help facilitate the technical part of the process relating to R4D activities. For example, the technician ensures that things on the ground are proceeding as planned, links up with relevant actors, and strengthens communication between the R4D platform and the IP around R4D activities.

**Communication, linkage and feedback**

When R4D platform members are asked about the communication within their platform, they mention that most communication takes place during platform meetings (Photo 14), by email (e.g. minutes, reports and invitations) and over the phone. Besides this, bilateral communication relating to particular tasks or elements of the R4D process takes place between those R4D platform members directly involved in, or responsible for, these things. In general, the R4D plat-
form members referred to communication as still rather weak. However, one added that, between actors belonging to the same stakeholder group, the communication is more advanced.

Similarly, IP members also explained that much of the communication between IP members occurs within platform meetings. In addition, there are smaller meetings and informal talks between some IP members – often relating to field activities or business arrangements between members (e.g. between farmers and agri-dealers to buy fertiliser) – and phone calls between members. Moreover, before each IP meeting, invitations are circulated; often these are paper invitations but sometimes the IP meeting is announced over the local radio if sufficient funds to support this are available. During meetings, the IP secretary writes (handwritten) minutes.

For the communication between the R4D platform and the IP, a distinction is made between more formally regulated information exchanges and more informal exchanges. Regarding the formally regulated ones, R4D platform members mentioned that both the IP and the R4D platform can share reports about what they are each doing, or important preliminary decisions that can impact the IP (e.g. action plans). Moreover, for some of the trials, so-called participatory farmer evaluations are conducted with IP members (Photo 7), giving them a chance to give their input. Nevertheless, most formal communication between the IP and the R4D platform goes through representatives. That is, on the one hand, every time the R4D platform meets, there are two IP representatives present (Photo 15), and the local technician who assists in trial management and facilitating processes relating to the trials is also part of the R4D platform. The two IP representatives are always key people in the IP – e.g. the local focal person or the secretary – as their role is critical in that they should give input into decisions made by the R4D platform that affect the IP as well as transmit information discussed in the R4D platform to their IP – e.g. to verify proposed plans. On the other hand, when the IP organises meetings, R4D platform members can decide to participate and subsequently report about their visit in the next R4D platform meeting. The latter often occurs in relation to concrete activities, as it is otherwise difficult to mobilise resources for participation.

More informal communication occurs, for example, when R4D platform members and IP members meet in the field in relation to implementation or monitoring of R4D activities and they share their knowledge and views. Moreover, according to the national facilitator, when IP members happen to be in Bukavu, they also often pass by his office to get an update.
Challenges relating to communication mentioned by R4D platform members include a heavy reliance on online communication on their side, whereas the IP members generally cannot access this. Moreover, for R4D platform members who do not have activities in the Field Site, it is difficult to go there to find out what is happening on the ground. According to the national facilitator, another challenge is that information coming from outside that is really relevant for the platforms is often provided in English, hence restricting access to the few people able to understand it. Furthermore, IP members mainly mentioned their challenge of financing communication, including paying for radio shows, buying airtime, and acquiring transport to move to other groupements and talk to IP members living there. Also, they mentioned that they would like to have a camera to take pictures of what they are doing to be able to capture and memorise past activities and share them with potential new partners.

**Decision-making power over R4D activities**

At many stages in the multi-stakeholder process, different groups have brainstormed about Field Sites, Entry Themes, Entry Points, challenges, opportunities and so on. Hence all have given input into the kind of R4D activities developed under Humidtropics. More specifically, this happened at the launch in May 2013, during many informal meetings with researchers and potential partners in 2013, in interviews with farmers conducted during a field visit late in 2013, in the RAAIS workshop with different local stakeholders, in the launch meeting of the IP, and in many other R4D platform, IP and researcher meetings that followed. The question remains however: who really influenced activities?

When different people involved in the multi-stakeholder process are asked this question, they give many different answers. Some explain that it has been generally about consensus and that the IP and the R4D platform are always involved in the decision-making process. Others mention that it is a combination of IP members and researchers deciding. Again others straightforwardly say that the required protocols and pre-defined objectives of the active projects in the Field Site actually restrict the platform’s true decision-making power. Indirectly, this was confirmed by researchers on one of the projects linked to Humidtropics, who said that the project already has its objectives and plans which it brings to the R4D platform to try to find a match. Another researcher mentioned that he thought that probably nobody involved in decision making would actually feel he or she could decide on what should be done, as decision-making power is considerably diffuse and distributed over many actors and many...
occasions throughout the process. Most likely, all these answers capture different aspects of what is actually taking place in relation to decision-making power over field activities.

When the question of decision-making power is viewed in the context of the Humidtropics Field Site, the abundance of active projects in that region is striking. Many of these projects are linked to Humidtropics, and partners responsible for implementing them participate in the R4D platform and are requested to report their activities in performance matrices designed for Humidtropics. Consequently, the distinction between what is and what is not part of the platform’s activities is not always very clear-cut and may influence stakeholders’ perceptions of the subject of their decision-making power. Still, the existence of projects boosted the process in terms of field activities and opportunities for strengthening collaboration and coordination between these projects/partners. Simultaneously, it allowed some field activities to move in parallel, faster and sometimes partly bypassing platform processes, engagement and ownership. Potentially, the decision made in May 2015 in the ‘IP meeting with partners’ to organise a joint planning meeting just before the new planting season could facilitate the different projects and partners becoming even more genuinely integrated with the platform process.

Nevertheless, when one compares the activities going on in the field with the Entry Themes as formulated after the first field visit in November 2013, there is plenty of overlap. Moreover, even though no livestock have yet been introduced, this is still on the agenda and, according to the researcher coordinating activities under the platform-led innovation fund, the IP decided what type of livestock should be introduced (cows). Hence, although it is uncertain to what extent, local stakeholders have certainly been able to steer R4D activities.

Finally, parallel to activities implemented through projects, the IP manages the three hectares of land provided by the landowner and additional small IP farmer fields with replicas of trials. For these IP fields, it is, respectively, the 12 IP members paying for inputs to cultivate the three hectares and the farmers owning the small IP fields who decide what to plant on these lands. Other IP members can give their opinion about this, but they do not decide, according to the IP secretary.

**Discussion and lessons learned**

On the basis of experiences in the first two years of multi-stakeholder processes in DR Congo, some interesting aspects can be discerned.
First, there is a difference in level of self-reliance between the local level IP and the subnational level R4D platform. That is, to date, R4D platform meetings are still called by the national facilitator, members receive some allowances, and resources needed to organise meetings are paid for by Humidtropics – sometimes with the exception of meeting venues. In contrast, the IP generally meets on its own initiative and uses its own resources. If this difference is linked to the incentives for members in the different platforms, the benefits for IP members seem to be more directly applicable to their day-to-day activities and source of income. Some R4D platform members mentioned coming into contact with new partners and getting a chance to promote their organisation through the platform as benefits of engaging with the R4D platform, but they might really be looking for concrete activities, facilities and/or funding that they could use to generate income or expand their organisation. In contrast, some IP members have improved access to quality seeds, fertiliser and other inputs, or knowledge that they can apply in their own fields. Moreover, at R4D platform level, a lot of planning and deskwork is done during and outside platform meetings, which for only a selection of R4D platform partners is followed by going to the field and implementing what has been decided upon. At IP level, a large number of members are directly involved in R4D activities (simply because there are more farmers required to host trials or attend training compared to the number of people required to implement these). Also, IP members are geographically closer to field activities, allowing them to visit these after meetings. Hence, the action element of the platform is more visible at IP level, and this may stimulate engagement in that platform. Although the exact cause of the different level of self-reliance is hard to pinpoint, there is a good chance that it is linked to perceived investments and benefits. As the ECA Flagship manager pointed out in response to participation levels in the R4D platform: “People come to a platform at an opportunity cost. They have to leave something else in order to come, so they weigh their interest and they weigh their time, it always comes at a cost.”

Secondly, an interesting phenomenon that may have impacted the multi-stakeholder platforms is the abundance of projects active in the Field Site. These are in a way linked to the platform (as those responsible for implementing them are also platform members) and in a way detached from it as these projects have their own objectives, decision-making structures and timing, and some started before the R4D platform and the IP were established. The existence of these projects definitely increased the amount of action in the Field Site, and this can generate energy and enthusiasm. However, as much of the decision making and implementation of these projects linked to the platform takes place outside platform meetings, perceptions of
what can be considered as the platform’s achievements or under its responsibility and control can also become ambiguous. Consequently, this can influence feelings of ownership among platform members.

Thirdly, the learning triggered by the platform reflection meetings points to the importance of investing time and effort in building the platform process, talking about members’ expectations and interests, and explicating some basic modes of operation. Simultaneously, it demonstrates the importance of reflection to tackle challenges, as well as the need to be open to change when this is envisioned by platform members.

Fourthly, a more practical lesson that can be learned is the need to spread the workload created by more administrative requirements (e.g. protocols, reporting templates, planning of work and budget planning) and fieldwork implementation, either in time or over different people. Otherwise, this can create competition between attention to the facilitation of the multi-stakeholder process (e.g. linking up commitments) and timely implementation of field activities (e.g. delay in planting).
Bibliography and other sources


Humidtropics (2014, March, 19), Compte rendu de l’atelier de restitution et de planification des activités du programme Humidtropics/IITA. Meeting minutes.

Humidtropics (2014, April 15), Compte rendu de la réunion de la plate-forme d’innovation de Mushinga-Lubona. Meeting minutes.


Humidtropics (2014, June 17), Rapport de la réunion de la plateforme ‘Research for development (R4D)/Humidtropics.’ Meeting minutes.

Humidtropics (2014, November 21), Compte rendu de la réunion de R4D/Cluster 4, tenue à Bulungu Hotel. Meeting minutes.

Humidtropics (2015, January 30), Compte rendu de la réunion plateforme R4D Humidtropics. Meeting minutes.

Humidtropics (2015, February 13), Réunion de R4D. Meeting minutes.


Interviewees

IITA staff conducting the Humidtropics baseline study (18 November 2014)

Action Site facilitator Humidtropics DR Congo (6 July 2015)

IITA staff member working on M&E and platform documentation (8 July 2015)

INERA researcher and manager of Cluster 4 funding (9 July 2015)

IP secretary (9 July 2015)

IP member and local focal person (9 July 2015)

R4D platform chairperson and coordinator of NGO and women’s organisation SARCAF (9 July 2015)

IITA researcher working on Humidtropics (10 July 2015)

R4D platform member and coordination of NGO and women’s organisation ACOSYF (10 July 2015)

R4D platform member and member of government (11 July 2015)

Other sources

Progress reports, research protocols and reports, power point presentations, event registration forms filled out for learning system, photos, monthly updates of ECA flagship (January 2014-May 2015), participatory observation during the reflection meetings, and two R4D platform meetings and informal talks with key people involved in the process.
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 the DR Congo: a local level innovation platform to foster participatory experimentation in Ngweshe and a provincial research for development platform in South Kivu to bring on board the key scaling actors. Research for development activities in DR Congo 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, 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.