

Policy Brief

Local funding mechanisms to support local innovation processes



Innovator Esther Ssebagala explains her quail egg business to ProLinnova Subregional Coordinator Jacob Wanyama in Uganda (photo: David Ssozi)

Highlights

Local innovation support facilities (LISFs) have been successfully piloted in Africa and Asia.

LISFs put resources and decision-making power in the hands of local structures.

Evidence exists that LISFs impact on food and nutrition security as well as income generation, strengthening local economies.

Local innovation support facilities (LISFs) are mechanisms that allow local structures to provide resources for local innovation processes to applicants on a competitive basis.

Resourcing local innovation processes

Farmers with limited resources, when faced with challenges, make changes to their farming systems, their agricultural practices, and even the products they supply in order to survive. Within communities, there are individuals who show remarkable capacity to innovate and we refer to them as 'local innovators'. However, innovating comes with costs and risks, which can be discouraging. Developing a new tool might require working with a local artisan, while trying a new crop variety not only requires the purchase of new seed, but also the risk that it may not perform any better than existing varieties and might in fact be a complete failure. If local innovators have access to resources that support and derisk the innovation process, they will be encouraged to try out new things that they have come across or ideas that they have for solving a particular challenge or taking advantage of an opportunity that presents itself.

ProLinnova and its principles

ProLinnova is a global community of practice that recognizes the importance of local innovation by farmers and other members of resource-limited communities that face challenges such as climate change and economic shocks.

Local innovations are also seen as an important entry point for agricultural research and development (ARD) practitioners wishing to work with communities to address their needs and build on what is already being done locally to solve challenges. This multi-stakeholder joint-innovation process is known within ProLinnova as participatory innovation development (PID). Local innovation and PID are not limited to developing technical solutions, and often includes a number of complementary innovations of technical and non-technical (institutional, social, marketing arrangements and so on) nature.

Over two decades, LISFs have been introduced to different learning sites across country platforms (CPs) in Africa and Asia. Different mechanisms for establishing, operationalizing and sustaining them have been tried out in different CPs and by different partners. The first project under the ProLinnova umbrella that focused specifically on LISFs was the 'Farmer Access to Innovation Resources (FAIR)' project, which was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and implemented over a number of phases between 2007 and 2012. More recently, LISFs were established through the suite of projects funded by Misereor, the last of which was the 'Expanding the Promotion of Local Innovation for Food Security and Healthy Nutrition (ELI-FaNS) project.

ProLinnova vision:

A world where women and men farmers play decisive roles in ARD for sustainable livelihoods

An opportunity for cross-learning

One of the key objectives of Prolinnova is to support learning across CPs. Such an opportunity to share lessons related to LISF implementation was provided through the 11th Hour Programme.

Through this initiative, members of eight Prolinnova CPs were able to reflect on how they had initiated and operated their LISFs and share about how this could have been done better, especially in terms of sustaining the LISFs beyond and between funded projects.

LISF mechanisms

What was clear from the analysis of the different LISF experiences was that some elements were 'non-negotiables':

- There needs to be a formal structure (Trust, Community-based organisation, CBO), with a bank account that can receive the funds.
- The CBO needs to have sound financial management and reporting systems in place to be able to handle the supply of inputs and materials, cover transport costs for attending events, and in some case disburse funds to innovators.

- There needs to be some form of agreement with the innovator/s receiving the funds in terms of what was expected of them.
- There needs to be some form of own- or co-contribution from the innovators to ensure ownership / buy-in.
- LISFs need to be operationised within the context of a multi-stakeholder platform so that the CBO has support from different actors with supporting the innovation processes.
- Links with microfinance institutions and village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) offer opportunities as long as the focus is on providing support to innovation processes and not to general production.
- The disbursement model needs to balance the capabilities of the innovators to repay loans, the primary beneficiaries of the innovations that are developed and the need to make the LISFs self-sustaining.

The cases below illustrate the types of innovation processes supported by LISFs and their impact.

Case 2: ANFANNI enriched infant flour, improving nutrition and livelihoods in Benin

Under the ELI-FaNS project, a female farmer-innovator (Latifa Zime Yerima) developed a locally produced enriched infant flour known as *Anfanni*, aimed at addressing child malnutrition in her community. The innovation was based on the use of locally available ingredients, combined through traditional knowledge and improved processing techniques to enhance nutritional value. Through the LISF grant, the innovator was able to acquire essential equipment and inputs, improve processing conditions, and refine the formulation of the flour. The support also facilitated experimentation with different ingredient combinations and preparation methods, leading to improvements in both nutritional quality and product consistency. In addition, efforts were made to enhance packaging and presentation, thereby increasing the product's attractiveness and marketability. This case demonstrates the potential of LISFs to link local innovation with

nutrition outcomes and economic empowerment. It highlights the importance of combining technical support, product development and market orientation to maximise the impact of farmer-led innovations. It also shows how small, targeted financial support can catalyse transformative changes in both livelihoods and community health.

Innovator Latifa Zimé, recipient of a LISF grant from the ELI-FaNS project, showcasing her innovation of fortified, labeled, and packaged infant flour "Anfanni" at a local innovation fair in Parakou, Northern Benin (Photo credit: Georges Djohy)



Case 1: Liquid manure innovation from Cameroon

Minsili Helene, is a woman innovator who produces liquid manure from Marguerite flower (*Tithonia diversifolia*) combined with small chili pepper (*Capsicum frutescens*) and lemon (*Citrus aurantiifolia*). With support from the LISF grant, she purchased 5 storage drums (200 L capacity), which resolved the challenge of availability, and was able to improve her packaging through the creation of several labels to facilitate product marketing. The challenge she faced was the transport of the drums due to the poor condition of the roads.

Minsili Helene (known as Mama Douala), the lady in the green dress, presenting her innovation.

Photo: Amina Bwebeyupu.

Case 3: Success story of Mr. Hamidu Anamoo - Boosting livestock productivity through innovative feed supplementation in Ghana



Mr. Hamidu Anamoo is a 34-year-old farmer from Boko Community in the Bongo District of Ghana's Upper East Region, and he is improving livestock production through local innovation. In addition to farming millet, maize, and guinea corn (a sorghum variety), he also rears cattle, sheep, and goats. He trades these livestock in local markets and in Yelwongo, Burkina Faso. Like many farmers in the area, he faced challenges during the dry season when feed became scarce, resulting in poor animal health and reduced market value. To address this, Hamidu developed a nutritious supplementary feed known locally as "*dinuoma duusa*." He prepares it by combining maize waste flour, rice bran, and local bean husks, with a small quantity of salt dissolved in water. This feed significantly improves the condition of his animals, enabling them to gain weight within a short period. His innovation began in 2014 when he successfully used the feed to rehabilitate an

emaciated cow, and he has since expanded the practice by buying lean animals, fattening them, and reselling them at a profit. Through support from the LISF, Hamidu received inputs and financial assistance to scale up his innovative enterprise. As a result, he has increased his income and improved the productivity of his livestock. His innovation offers a practical solution to dry season feeding challenges and is inspiring other farmers in the community to adopt better livestock management practices. *"The support I have received through LISF, brought about significant change for me. It made it possible for me to expand my innovation and improve the health of my animals. Now I am able raise stronger livestock and earn more income to support my family."*

Case Study 4: From a Seed to a Home – Kakembo Ziboyimu (56years old), Mityana, Uganda

Kakembo Ziboyimu had been preserving indigenous seeds for years. He understood the varieties – guava, tomato, amaranth, pumpkin, beans, pawpaw, calliandra, "nakati" and others – in the deep way that comes from growing them across many seasons. His innovation was not the seeds themselves but his system for extracting, drying and storing them in a way that maintained their germination viability far longer than conventional methods. The LISF grant of UGX 70,000 allowed him to purchase proper packaging and refine his storage process. Word spread among neighbouring farmers who had watched conventional seeds fail in difficult seasons. His preserved varieties were dependable. Demand grew. He used the income to buy a motorcycle for product delivery. His earnings continued to grow until he was able to purchase land and build his own home. He describes the moment he completed that house as the moment he understood what the



LISF had really done for him. Today his innovation is still active. His farm functions as an informal demonstration site. A grant of UGX 70,000 catalysed a business, a home and a community resource that other farmers continue to benefit from.

Kakembo Ziboyimu, an innovator from Uganda

Source: A seed keeper in Uganda - A Growing Culture
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffkiINAmzws>)

Case 5: Poultry disease control using Aloe vera and croton seeds (Makueni action-learning site), Kenya

This is a local innovation developed by Louise Muumbua, a female smallholder poultry farmer in Mukaa Village in Makueni County. She faced a growing demand to supply chickens both in local hotels and in urban centres as far as Nairobi. This prompted her to expand her enterprise, an initiative that brought numerous challenges related to poultry feeds and diseases. She therefore developed a local disease remedy using Aloe vera and the seeds of a local plant (often regarded as a weed) called mu-quinine (with the Latin name of *Croton megalocarpus*), so as to ensure the survival of her chicks. In order to avoid shortage of these plants particularly during dry seasons, she dries the materials in the shade and then mills them into a powder and stores the ethno-veterinary medicine in plastic containers. She administers the concoction through the poultry's drinking water. The Croton elements in the concoction also serve as feed supplements.



With the LISF support, this innovation was subjected to farmer-led joint experimentation, an exercise that brought together innovators, researchers, extension officers and other stakeholders to better understand, validate and promote local innovations and her concoction realised 100% survival rate of the chicks. The innovator has been sharing this innovation with the neighbours in her village to increase the number of chickens available to meet the high demand for poultry in urban centres; she buys chicken from them and sells in urban centres, as far as Nairobi. This not only assures her of household food and nutrition security but also enables her generate some income to make a living and meet other households needs.

Innovator, Louse Muumbua, sharing her product at a farmer fair (Source: Prolinnova Kenya)

Implications for policy and practice

- Secure ways to sustain the LISF - either with ARD resources from government or from reinvestment of profits from supported innovations.
- Ensure that the burden of supporting local innovation processes is not passed on to local structures without ensuring that the mechanisms in place to compensate for managing LISF resources.
- Ensure that LISF resources are only used for supporting innovation processes or for activities that outscale innovations and the recognition of LI and PID as key for strengthening local communities.

This brief by Brigid Letty, Jacob Wanyama, Paul Jimmy and Chesha Wettasinha draws on an initiative funded by the 11th Hour Programme of the Schmidt Family Foundation, which allowed for documentation of experiences from multiple Prolinnova CPs that have implemented LISFs in the past.



Promoting local innovation in ecologically oriented agriculture and natural resource management is a community of practice involving partners in 18 countries in Africa and Asia. Initiated by CSOs as a Global Partnership Programme under the umbrella of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), it embraces both state and non-state organisations. It promotes recognition of local innovation by women and men farmers as an entry point to farmer-led participatory research and development. The ultimate aim is to integrate this approach into institutions of agricultural research, advisory services and education. Over the years, funding has come mainly from the Netherlands and French Governments, Rockefeller Foundation, GFAR, Misereor and partners' own contributions.

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