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Strengthening Agricultural Innovation Systems
Programme

Consolidating the CoS-SIS Research Agenda

*Proceedings of the CoS-SIS Cotonou, Benin Workshop
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*Editors
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Enabling system innovation: the CIG as a network of stakeholders to address institutional constraints in water management in Benin

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Context

The Water management domain of the CoS-SIS programme in Benin included river inland valley management and the agro-pastoral dams management. As entry point, we emphasize on integrated water resources management by supporting local initiatives to deal with conflicts around agro-pastoral dams and strengthening local initiatives in rice value chain in the river inland valley. These entry points were identified from the result of exploratory study, baseline and diagnostic study.

The lack of collective action by the farmer based organization (FBO) was noted for the maintenance of the irrigation system, organization of rice marketing, management of the agro-pastoral dams, etc. The objective of this research is to develop strategies to alleviate some of the institutional constraints that hinder smallholder farmers to benefit from the windows of opportunities. To achieve this, Concertation and Innovation Groups (CIG *i.e.* a network of stakeholders meeting around a common goal) were setting up to provide a platform for the key stakeholders discuss institutional constraints that do not allow smallholder farmers to benefit from the opportunities related to water management. The CIG is a learning environment where all the members exchange views and experiences without any complication of power relationships. This paper presents the steps followed in setting up the CIG.

The process started with an exploratory study to identify the windows of opportunity for smallholder farmers, followed by diagnostic and baseline studies

to investigate in-depth the different opportunities identified. Based on these studies, key actors were identified and potential stakeholders that could be members of the CIG were contacted. As the CIG is a new concept fitting in system innovation, together with the CoS-SIS community it was necessary to establish a common understand of the CIG and its component. The CIG concept was then adopted by re-defining roles between the PhD study and the research associate's (RA) activities. It was decided that, the PhD study should focus attention on the institutional change at local (community or village level) while the RA works at district or department and national level.

Actors contacted to be member of the CIG

Table 1 presents some stakeholders contacted for the CIG formation for the river inland valley management and the agro-pastoral dams management. These stakeholders were categorized according to the institutional constraints.

Table 1. Stakeholders identified for the CIG formation according to the institutional constraints

<i>Types of water management</i>	<i>Institutional constraints</i>	<i>Stakeholders</i>
River inland valley management	Lack of maintenance of the irrigation canal and equipment	DGR (cellule bas-fond), DAGRN, CeRPA, CeCPA, FBO, Chinese cooperation
	Market outlet for local rice produce	Local traders (Dadjè), VECO NGO, UNIRIZ, farmer organization, DICAF/MAEP
	Access to specific input especially fertilizer and seed	INRAB, Africa Rice, local traders, DICAF/MAEP
	Access to credit	CLCAM, NGO involved in microfinance
Agro-pastoral dams management	Conflict between herders and farmers	UCOPER, UDOPER, CeCPA, Municipality, farmer organization, herder organization, traditional chief, dam management team, SNV, DFRN
	Lack of management plan for better dam management	Dam management team, farmer organization, herder organization, UCOPER, PADPPA, DFRN

Activities planned with the CIG members

Table 2 presents some activities planned by the CIG according to the different institutional constraints identified. Most of these activities are aimed at improvement of the current activities in the field especially extension, market organization, credit organization and the functioning of the platform for conflict resolution.

Table 2. Activities planned according to the institutional constraints

<i>Type of water management</i>	<i>Institutional constraints</i>	<i>Activities</i>
River inland valley management	Lack of maintenance of the irrigation canal and equipment	Development of strategies and procedures that could allow the DGR and the DAGRN to intervene for training FBO for the maintenance of the canals.
	Market outlet for local rice produce	* Development of strategies linking rice producers to market. * Development of actions with policy maker at national level in order to reduce the amount of imported rice and promote local rice.
	Access to specific input	Development of concerted action with Benin national research institute (INRAB) and Africa Rice for seed production at local level.
Agro-pastoral dams management	Conflict between herders and farmers	* Delimitation of corridor accepted by all of the actors. * Collective learning on the notion of interdependency. * Development of strategy for conflict resolution.

Lessons learned

Three key lessons were learned from the interaction with the CIG members.

- i. People believe when they have the opportunity to learn from successful experiences.
- ii. By organizing some exchange visits it will create an incentive for the participants. As the settlement of the national CIG is on-going, there is a need to think on how one could better connect activities of this national CIG and those going on at the district level and at the local level.

- iii. There is also, a need to develop relevant methodology to measure changes due to the CIG activities knowing that in rural area, changes could not be attributed to a program alone as several interventions are going on in the area.