

**CGIAR Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis  
for Technology Development and Institutional Innovation**

# **Technical Report**

## **1. Identifying Information**

**Project Title:** Establishment of a farmer Centered agricultural Research Network in China (FCRNC)

**Date:** April 1, 2000 – March 31, 2002

**Reporting Period:** April 1 – March 31, 2002

**Reporter:** Li Xiaoyun

**Institution:** Center for Integrated Agricultural Development, China Agricultural University

**Address:** CIAD, China Agricultural University  
Beijing 100094, China

**Collaborating Institutions:** Network members

## **2. Achievements and Constraints**

### **Major achievements in the past two years included:**

- The formal establishment of the Farmer Centered Agricultural Research Network with its missions and functions defined. And a secretariat was setup in June 2001. There are some 20 members institutions at present. The network is now the key nation-wide driving-force in China for promoting PR with the future intention of bringing changes to the formal research system.
- The pilot work of this project, participatory research on rice seedling raising in the saline region in northeast China, was highly appreciated by farmers and by agricultural researchers. (Seedlings are often weak and yellowish due to unknown causes, many years' formal research efforts failed to solve this problem). The PHD thesis of Ms LU Min, based on this pilot research work, was rewarded as an outstanding paper by China Agricultural University in 2001. Ms Lu Min was the first PHD student in China in the field of PR; also the pilot work itself was the first case in technology development through participatory approaches with a gender perspective in China. The methodology framework developed by this pilot work was considered very appropriate for Chinese situations.
- By the year 2000, one network member (Mr. Sun Changzhan and his team from Jilin Agricultural University in northeast China) has successfully mobilized a domestic PR project locally. This could be considered as a breakthrough in China.
- Since year 2000, another network member, Mr Tuo Debao and his team from the Inner Mongolia Academy of Agricultural Science have started applying participatory concepts and methods in their own domestic projects related to dry-land farming. This is another breakthrough in China.

- Through the efforts of CIAD, IDRC has granted a 3-year research project to the network since April 2001. The project is titled as “Promotion of Participatory research in Agriculture with emphasis on CBNRM, and Support to the FCNRC”.
- 9 out of the total 20 network members are now conducting participatory research in the field of natural resource management (with small grant support from IDRC, ranging from 5000 to 8000 USD). In addition to the IDRC small grant, these members have obtained domestic counterpart funds of equal amount.
- 4 issues of the network’s newsletters have been published and they have been distributed to over 100 national research institutions and individuals all over China.
- 5 workshops with different focal topics were organized during this period; the later 3 were combined with the IDRC project. Topics of the workshops included: missions and functions of FCNRC, participatory research and FSR, PRA, preparation of small grant proposals, preparation of research and work plans, procedures and tools for diagnosis.
- In conjunction with the workshops, reading/training materials were widely distributed among and beyond the network members. Specifically, a FAO manual on FSD (farming system development) was translated and distributed to the members.

In conclusion, this project has reached its objective of speeding-up and scaling-up participatory research in China. And the intended outputs were mostly achieved (with details in the following table).

Outputs designed in the proposal	Actual situation/deviations
(1) The network is established and its members are continuously increasing	Formally established in June 2000, initially 11 members, currently 20 members.
(2) Five research groups on priority issues are established and relevant research work conducted	Nine groups (mainly supported by the IDRC small grants), focusing on natural resource management.
(3) Reading materials on farmer-centered research are prepared and published	Reading materials prepared and distributed, but not officially published.
(4) Research achievements are effectively adopted by farmers	Only the results from the pilot work on rice seedling raising have been adopted by farmers and are continuously exploring.
(5) Research results are published and distributed within China	Not realized. Actually research is at the initial stage.
(6) Researchers have changed behaviors and attitudes towards farmers and their specific production issues	Yes, in the case of the network members only. This would be seen as the mobilization of domestic PR project and the application PR methodology in domestic projects as stated above.

**Constraints in the two years included:**

CIAD failed to fulfill its commitment of timely reporting to and communicating with CIAT due to frequently and relatively long-term external assignments to its staff that should be responsible for the

project. To certain extent, the team has somehow ignored these commitments. However, the implementation of the project could still be considered as smoothly in the first year, and since the 2nd year (a April 2001 onwards) it has been integrated with the IDRC project that is a follow-up of this one. With the established and the functioning of the network's secretariat (e-mail: nrmp@mail.cau.edu.cn), there should not be any such communication problems in the future.

Other constraints included some improper planning (too ambitious) and improper budgeting (e.g. underestimation of traveling costs that only allow members to take trains). To enable network members (also changing) understand and be familiar with PR concepts and methodology was long process, thus actual research could not be initiated as planned. Therefore such outputs related to research results were rather limited. Hopefully, there will be some concrete results in the coming two years as 9 members have started their field work in 2002 (IDRC project). The planned budget for workshops could cover the actual costs. Therefore, CIAD suspended such activities for some half year and later on

In the future, any report to IDRC will also be sent to CIAT.

### **3. Implications to Workplan**

In waiting for the IDRC project of "Promotion of Participatory research in Agriculture with emphasis on CBNRM, and Support to the FCNRC", CIAD has purposively suspended some project activities for a short period from later 2000 to early 2001. The aim of the suspension was to integrate these two projects so as to have dual efforts to effectively achieve the intended of objectives. As a result of such integration, some adjustments were made:

- IDRC project mainly provides small grants to network members to implement PR in their respective regions. It also provides support to setup a website for the network.
- CIAT and IDRC projects jointly support such activities of training workshops and other network activities, as a result, 5 such activities were organized instead of the original 3.

### **4. Communication and Dissemination of Information**

The project has organized or jointly contributed to the following activities:

- Organization of 5 workshops, including:
  - Startup workshop and introduction of PR. July 2000, Beijing.
  - IDRC project's startup workshop and case presentations, June 2001, Beijing.
  - Training on proposal preparation for IDRC small grants, October 2001, Beijing. Joint efforts of IDRC and CIAT projects.
  - Review of proposals and first cross visit, December 2001, Taiyuan, Shanxi Province. Joint efforts of IDRC and CIAT projects.
  - Training on PRA and diagnosis (for actual research to be implemented in 2002), January 2002, Nanning, Guangxi Province. Joint efforts of IDRC and CIAT projects.
- Publication of 4 issues of the network's newsletter. It was distributed to over 100 national research institutes. Contents include network activities, introduction of PR, etc..

- Presentation of the pilot research results (Participatory Technological Innovations on Rice Seedling Raising in the Saline Region in Northwest China) among students and agronomic researchers in China Agricultural University, as well as in Jilin Agricultural University. June-September, 2001.
- Review of PHD thesis (results of the above-mentioned pilot research) by outstanding researchers from China Agricultural University and from Chinese Academy of Agricultural Science. The thesis was eventually rewarded as an outstanding paper by China Agricultural University because of its methodology.
- Using the pilot research as a case in the curriculum of Development Research Methodology for undergraduates and postgraduates.
- Seminars on PR in Jilin and Southwest China agricultural universities by the network members.
- Participation in the NRM Small Grants Workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, November 2000.
- Presentation of the network in the training workshop on Small Livestock Production (? , also a CIAT project) organized by the China Tropical Agricultural University, March, 2001, Hainan, China.

## **5. Additional Comments**

The integration of this project with the IDRC one was a milestone event for the network that enabled the members to really start in-depth fieldwork by participatory approaches.

The network is going to organize its 6<sup>th</sup> workshop at the end April 2002 in Inner Mongolia for exchanging concrete experiences among its members based on their respective diagnosis prior to actual implementation of research plan. This is still a continuation of this reported project.