

An Innovative Partnership approach for increasing the Pro-Poor Impact of Livestock Research and Development activities

Watson, D.J., Irura, D., van Binsbergen, J., Minjauw, B., Hogland, D., Romney, D.

Abstract

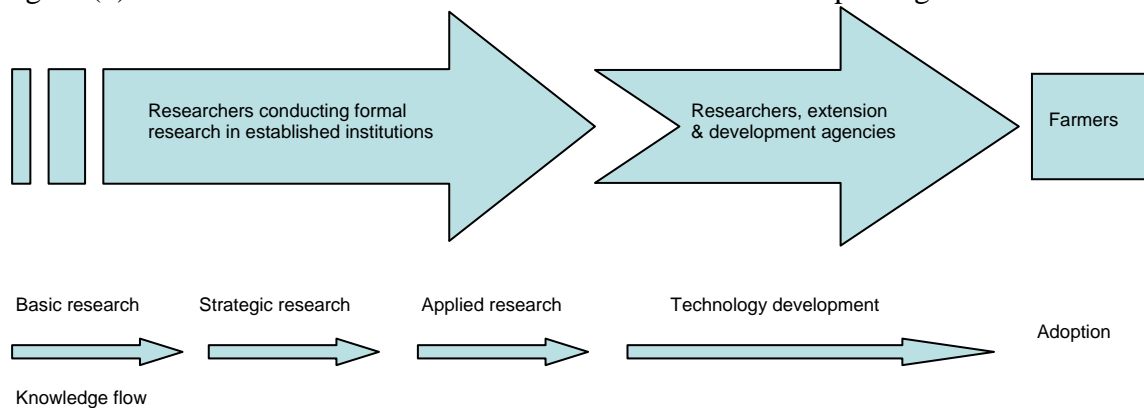
This paper explores the R4D partnership between ILRI (a predominantly research-based organisation) and VSF-Belgium (a predominantly emergency intervention & development organisation); two organisations that are closely allied by both their mission statement and goals. The introduction explains the context of, and justification for, the partnership and outlines what each organisation contributed and benefited from the partnership. This paper demonstrates that a desire to develop innovative scientifically backstopped interventions based on a solid grass-roots understanding of the challenges facing impoverished pastoralists and the potential development pathways out of poverty was the principal galvanising factor that brought the partnership together. This paper goes on to highlight the more innovative characteristics of the partnership and its achievements. Possibly the most innovative component of the partnership was ILRI and VSF-Belgium's creation of a joint staff position. Conversant with research and development environments, the chosen individual became a part-time Operational Project Leader in ILRI, whilst retaining his former position as Regional Director of VSF-Belgium. Capitalising on ILRI's research expertise, the partnership's principal objective was to generate a better understanding of the underlying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing pastoralists in Turkana, Kenya. Whilst it is an unfortunate fact that, donors are specifically either research, development or emergency orientated, the unique nature of this partnership enabled matched funds for a R4D project to be levered from DFID, a predominantly research donor, and Belgium Survival Fund (BSF), a development donor. R4D activities included: a review of VSF-Belgium's destocking intervention; the development of FFS tools for illiterate pastoralists; development of PM&E tools for pastoralists; and several studies on LFFS and CAHW approaches, livestock market access, livelihoods diversification; climate change, and animal health. A portion of the development funds were also used by VSF-Belgium to establish 50 LFFS. Facilitated through its close links with VSF-Belgium, as part of the COOPI Consortium (COOPI, VSF-Belgium, VSF-Suisse, Terra Nuova), ILRI also helped to secure part of €2,350,000 received from ECHO's Drought Response Project across nine Districts in Northern Kenya, 2005. ILRI's groundbreaking access to emergency relief funds allowed studies to be undertaken on: the likely impacts of drought induced veterinary and water interventions on human and social capital and livelihood coping strategies of pastoralists; the effects of water interventions on livelihoods and the environment; the epidemiological impacts; the economic the impacts, and key spatial characteristics. Another key achievement of the partnership was the recognition of both partners in new platforms. VSF-Belgium improved its profile in the research community through its active presence in research workshops & conferences & its representation on DFID's Animal Health Initiative Steering Committee. ILRI improved its profile and credibility with key development actors (especially livestock-focused INGOs) and enhanced the frequency and depth of its interface with the emergency relief and development community. For example, ILRI now works closely with other INGOs; particularly VSF Germany and VSF-Suisse. Indeed, ILRI delivered a key presentation at the 10th Anniversary of VSF-Belgium where many NGOs were present. Ultimately, since the creation of the partnership between ILRI and VSF-Belgium, there has been increased cohesion of, and knowledge flow through, an expanding community of practice devoted to the improvement of pastoralist livelihoods in the Horn of Africa.

Key words: Joint position, Innovative funding, Turkana District (Kenya), Livestock Systems, Pastoralists, Markets, Livelihoods

Introduction

Since the mid-1980s, it has grown ever more apparent that the unilinear and overly reductionist nature of traditional development models, based on mainstream theories such as Commercialization, Industrialisation and Commoditization, have failed to predict/explain the continued heterogeneity of agrarian development (Long & Van Der Ploeg, 1988; Marsden *et al*, 1996). In a similar vein, the same has also been apparent for the linear vision of science (Figure 1). In step 1 of the process, knowledge is generated in established formal research institutions and made available for key development and extension actors as key knowledge objects (e.g., literature) or as new technologies, which, for one reason or another, are inherently more superior than those already available. This research process is comprised of basic, strategic and applied research components. In the 2nd step, these inherently superior technologies and practices are automatically adopted by field researchers, extensionists and development agencies, with little need for further refinement. The 3rd step involves the automatic adoption of the new technology or practice by farmers eagerly awaiting solutions that address the key constraints in their evolving food systems.

Figure (1) The Linear Vision of Science: The traditional CGIAR paradigm

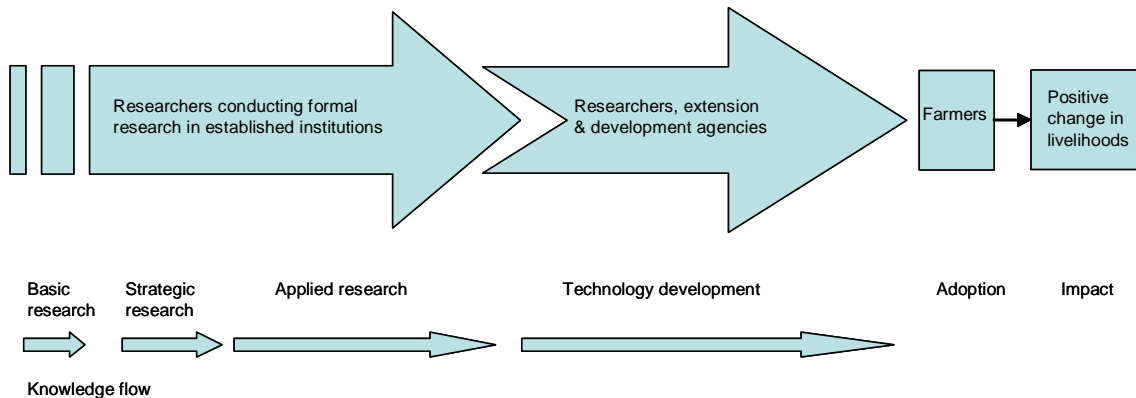


(Adapted from Ekboir, 2001)

Conversely, it is equally important to note that, the more actor-oriented models of agrarian development, which are based on the assumption that technology is socially constructed and that the diffusion of technologies and practices are a result of technology-user-culture interactions, fail to reflect the fact that individual choice is shaped by larger frameworks of meaning and action (*habitus* or disposition-to-act) and mediated by asymmetrical distributions of power. Set against this almost chaotic backdrop, actors involved in the production, development and utilisation of knowledge, either captured as knowledge objects or bound in a new technology or practices, have become increasingly cognisant of operating in a non-linear world. In the case of international agricultural research centres (IARCs), which are increasingly asked to demonstrate the contribution of their research towards increased food production and poverty alleviation, this has led to the slow but eventual realisation that the production of what they regard as superior new agricultural technologies and practices will not always have the expected increased food production and poverty-reduction effects. To this end,

whilst constantly reminded of their role to produce international public goods and to leave development to those with a comparative advantage, research centres belonging to the Consultative Group of International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) have, throughout the past 15 - 20 years, begun to re-prioritise their research activities and to strengthen their relationships with development and extension actors; leading to a greater perfusion of technology development and dissemination networks. In addition, as donor agencies became increasingly concerned about an apparent lack of improvement in the livelihoods in many of the world's poorest agriculture-based areas, CGIAR centres initialised research that attempts to understand existing pathways that have proved successful in delivering positive pro-poor development outcomes, particularly in marginalised environments. Figure (2) illustrates that, whilst still linear in principle, CGIAR centres began to prioritise applied research over basic research. In addition, CGIAR centres increased their focused on assessing the impact pathways of their outputs, both technologies and practices.

Figure (2) The Linear Vision of Science: Changing priorities in the CGIAR



During the past 5-10 years, CGIAR centres have slowly begun to acknowledge and, in some cases, embrace the paradigm of a non-linear vision of science. This paradigm insists that the generation and flow of the outputs of scientific research is not an automatic process of diffusion and adoption driven by the inherently superior characteristics of technologies themselves. Indeed, one of the key precepts of this paradigm is that processes are not predetermined but self-organise through the interaction of many actors. Whilst it is acknowledged that some actors may be more powerful than others, it is rare that a single actor (such as an IARC), or small group of actors, has the power to determine the development pathway (Ekboir, 2001). When attributing social agency with powers of negotiation, change, such as market integration or the adoption of new technologies and practices, should be envisaged as a contested process. The existence of what is perceived by research institutes as inherently superior technologies and practices cannot be deemed to automatically determine the actions of local agricultural communities. Instead, the process of technology transfer and market integration may be endorsed, or indeed resisted, to varying degrees (Marsden *et al*, 1996).

Figure (3) Non-linear Vision of Science: Complex problems with complex solutions

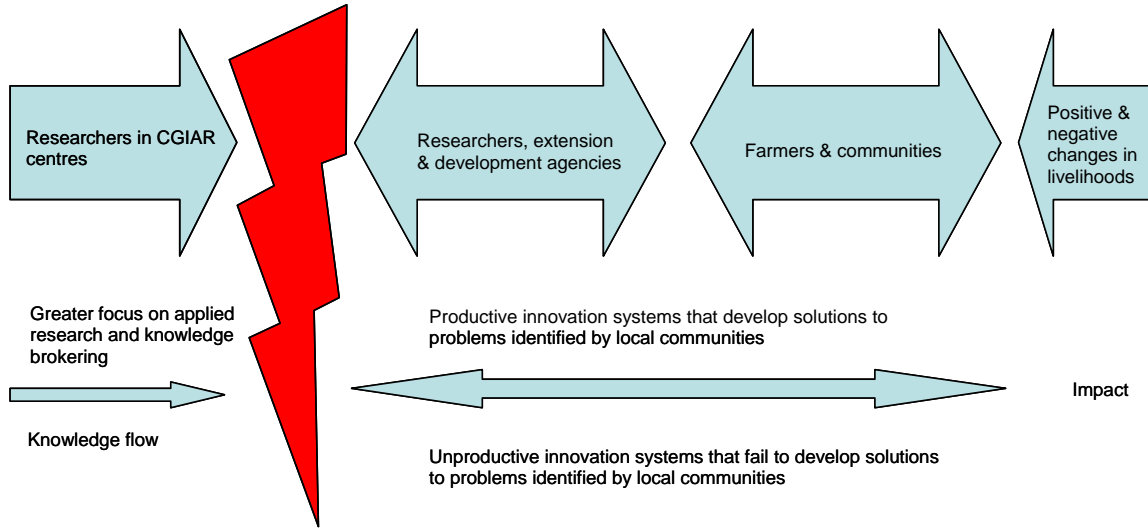
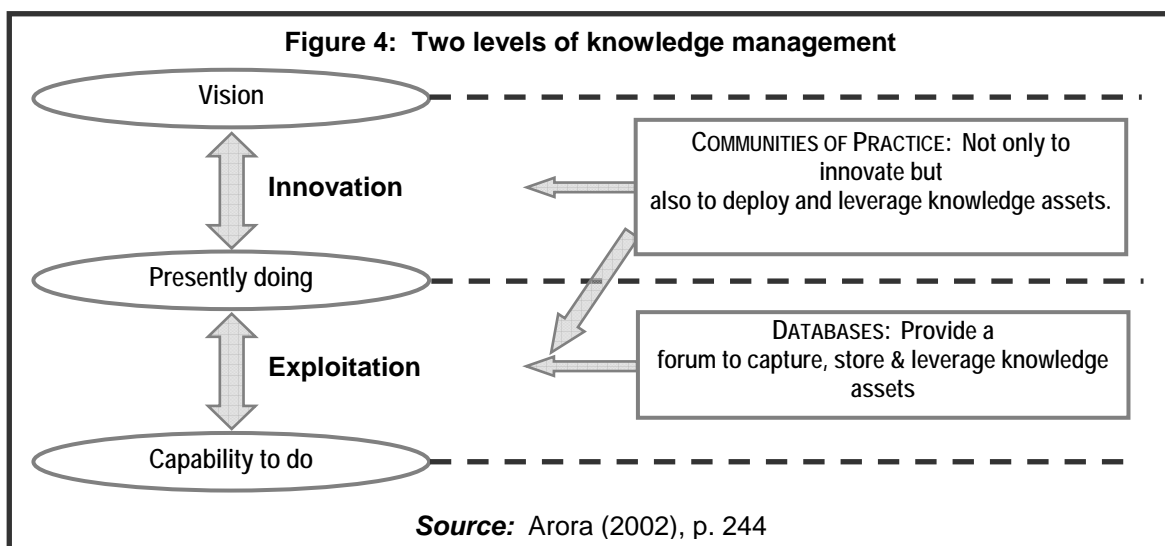


Figure (3) clearly illustrates that CGIAR centres have increasingly been forced to concede the often unwelcome fact that they exist within a considerably more complex environment than was previously acknowledged. In the new paradigm, CGIAR centres are faced with a myriad of potential knowledge and technology diffusion pathways; some which to a greater or lesser extent are either successful or unsuccessful. This can be explained by acknowledging that, agricultural development processes at the community level is as closely bound to their history, trends, and random events, than to the grand designs of external development agencies with golden bullet solutions to their problems. This paradigm insists that while it is in theory possible to predict the likely direction of path-dependent development trajectories over the short term, these predictions can easily be undermined by unpredicted events (Ekboir, 2001). Furthermore, in the context of agricultural development, it can be said that the non-linear paradigm insists that end users and those involved in the innovation systems which underpin the success of new technologies and practices are essential actors in both the identification of problems and potential R&D solutions to them. For the purpose of this paper, an innovation is defined as anything new introduced into a productive or social process. This broad definition includes new technologies as well as institutional changes (Ekboir, 2001). The basis for innovation is learning, i.e., the ability to gather information combined with the ability to use that information creatively in response to market opportunities or social needs (Ekboir, 2001). In addition, in light of changes in comparative advantage, particularly with respect to basic research in CGIAR centres compared to commercial corporations, CGIAR centres are currently debating whether or not their principal role should be knowledge generation or knowledge brokering; something that is especially significant for this paper. Combined with an acknowledgement of the highly complex nature of knowledge/technology generation and use and the pressing need to demonstrate appreciable impact on the livelihoods of the world's most vulnerable farmers, CGIAR centres face an enormous challenge in identifying the most appropriate approaches to achieve their goals. To this end, some CGIAR centres, such as ILRI, have gone a step further and piloted new partnership arrangements with down-stream, development-based,

actors in attempts to initiate new vehicles for the development, diffusion and sustainable adoption of their own, and other knowledge generators', new technologies and practices.

Conversely, donors have increasingly insisted that emergency and development actors, be they local CBOs and NGOs or international NGOs and intergovernmental development organisations, not only clearly demonstrate their impact on the ground but also provide an almost cast-iron rationale for their interventions. To this end, more progressive development actors are increasingly looking for hard and credible scientific evidence to support the structure and content of their interventions. Unfortunately, however, according to Staiger et al (2005), attempts to “foster knowledge sharing amongst centres and their partners have tended to focus on better management of information flows and on the capture of codified knowledge resulting from agricultural research. Though necessary and important, these activities are not sufficient for helping scientists deal with the complex challenges of sustainable agricultural development” Staiger *et al* (2005). Recently, CGIAR centres have begun to move towards knowledge management and away from traditional information management; characterized as access to information, which concentrates on technical handling, security, storage and delivery. On the other hand, knowledge management is anthropocentric and focused on developing systems and processes that leverage information and knowledge to promote originality, creativity, intelligence and learning.



According to Acosta and Ekboir (2003), improving knowledge creation and management, specifically through active learning in communities of practice, will help close the gap between what research and development actors are presently doing and where they need to be in the future (see Figure 4).

This paper explicitly explores the research 4 development partnership between ILRI and VSF-Belgium. It begins with a background of both organisations and the key factors which underpinned the creation of the partnership. The following sections focus on what each organisation hoped to achieve from the partnership, the partners respective roles, and the activities undertaken as part of the partnership. The next section highlights the

more innovative characteristics of the partnership and its actual achievements and concludes with the way forward.

The partners

According to ILRI, its mission is “to work at the crossroads of livestock and poverty, bringing high-quality science and capacity-building to bear on poverty reduction and sustainable development for poor livestock keepers and their communities”. It goes on to state that “ILRI works in partnerships and alliances with other organisations, national and international, in livestock research, training and information. ILRI works in all tropical developing regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean”. Placing poverty at the centre of an output-oriented agenda, ILRI’s strategy focuses on three livestock-mediated pathways out of poverty: (1) securing the assets of the poor, (2) improving the productivity of their livestock systems and (3) improving their market opportunities in the face of rapidly changing market channels and demands. ILRI’s research portfolio comprises five issue-oriented themes: Targeting research and development opportunities; Enabling innovation; Improving market opportunities; Using biotechnology to secure livestock assets; and People, livestock and the environment. ILRI also manages the System-wide Livestock Programme of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

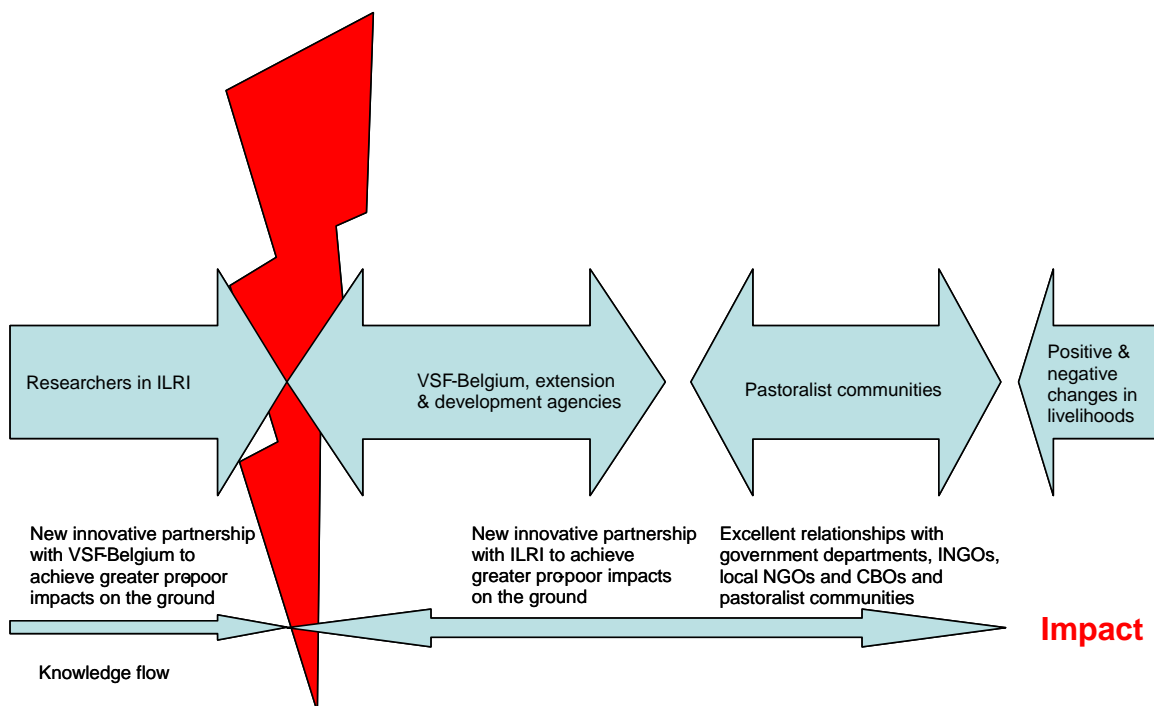
As a leading actor in both emergency and development interventions into livestock-based livelihood systems in some of the world’s most marginalised and hostile environments, Veterinaires Sans Frontieres Belgium (VSF-Belgium) is deemed as one of the most scientifically-based INGOs. According to its web-site, VSF-Belgium’s mission is “to improve the well-being of vulnerable populations in developing countries, by improving animal health and production”. Its modus operandi is to 1) “work in partnership, to train, to empower, to raise awareness”; 2) “establish partnerships based on mutual respect to further a common goal”; 3) put ourselves at the service of vulnerable populations in a constant process of learning”; 4) “train and to empower communities and to strengthen local partners involved in livestock”; 5) “respect the environment, local culture and laws, human rights, traditional knowledge, animal welfare”; 6) use ethical approaches, participatory and culturally relevant technology to achieve our goals”; 7) “sensitise the wider public to development issues, emphasizing on the role of the Animal as key factor for sustainable development”, and; 8) “implement projects in both development and emergency contexts according to the principle of impartiality”.

It is apparent to see that both ILRI and VSF-Belgium almost share ILRI’s mission and goals; the principal difference being that one focuses on research and the other focuses on development. However, as we have seen from the introduction, both now realise that maintaining a clear divide between research and development within the new paradigm is no longer the sensible option and that attempting to bridge the divide is the logical step forward.

Characteristics and goal of partnership

The partnership between ILRI and VSF-Belgium was explicitly designed to promote more successful and sustainable types of development interventions and more appropriate emergency interventions in principally subsistence livestock-based communities in Turkana District, Kenya, and, by doing so, contribute to achieving the Millennium goals. A desire to develop innovative interventions based on a solid grass-roots understanding of the challenges facing impoverished pastoralists and the potential development pathways out of poverty was the principal galvanising factor that brought the partnership together. Figure (5) illustrates attempts by those involved in the partnership to bridge the divide between research and development actors within the science – development continuum, in order to contribute to their shared goal. Figure (5) also stresses the excellent relationships that VSF-Belgium has with GoK departments, INGOs, local NGOs and CBOs and pastoralist communities, as well as the importance of a bi-directional flow of knowledge.

Figure (5) The Potential of Partnerships: Joined-up Science and Development



Partners roles and key objectives

ILRI's partnership with VSF-Belgium was expected to assist ILRI in achieving several objectives, namely: 1) Increase the adoption and impact of ILRI technologies and practices; 2) demonstrate ILRI's commitment to bridging the divide between research/development/impact, by attempting to join-up science, development and impact; 3) improve the profile and credibility of ILRI within the development community through networking and ambassadorial activities; 4) facilitate the expansion of ILRI's existing

geographic and systems coverage and close association with development activities without operating outside its mandate; 5) facilitate the creation of new and novel partnerships; 6) facilitate access to emergency and development funds (see below), and; 7) by accessing the voice of the poor through VSF-Belgium and their extensive network of local stakeholders, be in a better position to redirect existing research activities and identify new research topics. In the specific case of ILRI's research involvement in Turkana, Kenya, VSF-Belgium facilitated high quality interactions with key ancillary partners, including: the District Livestock Marketing Council, District Livestock Production Department, District Animal Production Department, District Development Department, Arid Lands, livestock market associations, local NGOs, international NGOs (including ITDG-Practical Action and Oxfam GB), and, most importantly, key representatives of nomadic pastoralist communities.

In return, ILRI provided VSF-Belgium with: 1) direct access and linkage to high quality multi-disciplinary scientific support and backstopping (including expertise in monitoring & evaluation and impact assessment); 2) improved VSF-Belgium's activity reports with scientific data; 3) access to high quality veterinary and GIS laboratory facilities; an active ambassador in the research arena, and, by association with an internationally renowned livestock research institute, improved its profile and credibility; 4) potential to influence the research agenda of an International institute, and; 5) access to research funds (see below).

Achievements of the partnership

Joint appointment

Whilst not an end in itself, perhaps the most innovative dimension of the partnership was the decision by ILRI and VSF-Belgium to jointly appoint a key member of staff who was comfortable and conversant with both the research and emergency/development intervention environments. The individual concerned was originally the full-time Regional Director for VSF-Belgium. After the decision was taken to implement the partnership, the individual became a part-time Operational Project Leader in ILRI, whilst retaining part-time Regional Director status at VSF-Belgium. As part of VSF-Belgium's Turkana Livestock Development Program Phase II (TLDP II), by utilising the scientific research strengths of ILRI and VSF-Belgium's insights into local livelihoods and processes of change, during the following months, the individual coordinated the formulation of highly focused research projects to better understand underlying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing pastoralists in Turkana. The smooth and incredibly productive execution of the research projects and capacity-building activities through the establishment of Herder Farmer Field Schools, was facilitated by VSF-Belgium's excellent links with other international NGOs, local Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), local representation of National Government, and, most importantly, local pastoralists and livestock traders. As a result of these excellent relationships, particularly the high level of openness, cooperation and collaboration, not only were the research projects perceived as highly useful to ILRI and VSF-Belgium's partners, this innovative research & development partnership generated substantial ownership of the process. In addition to the research and capacity-building activities

undertaken in Turkana, the individual also utilised his dual-function and his intimate knowledge of the INGO community to secure innovative sources of funding for research activities and made it possible for ILRI to better interface with the INGO community and for VSF-Belgium to better interface with the research community (including key donors).

Recognition of partners in new platforms

One of the key achievements of the partnership was the recognition of both partners in new platforms. For example, since the establishment of the partnership, VSF-Belgium has improved its profile in the research community through its active presence in research workshops & conferences. Furthermore, VSF-Belgium has also improved its relationship with the donor community through its recent representation on DFID's Animal Health Initiative Steering Committee. In the case of ILRI, since the establishment of the partnership, ILRI has improved its profile and credibility with key development actors (especially livestock-focused INGOs) and enhanced the frequency and depth of its interface with the emergency relief and development community. For example, ILRI now works closely with other INGOs; particularly VSF Germany and VSF-Suisse. Indeed, ILRI delivered a key presentation at the 10th Anniversary of VSF-Belgium where many NGOs were present. In addition, the partnership with VSF-Belgium also facilitated ILRI's involvement with a consortium of NGOs (COOPI, VSF-Belgium, VSF-Suisse, and Terra Nuova – see below).

Innovative funding mechanisms

Whilst it is an unfortunate fact that, in the contemporary period at least, donors are specifically either research, development or emergency orientated, the unique nature of this partnership enabled matched funds for a research & development project to be levered from both a research donor and a development donor. The joint funding mechanism was a win, win, win, win situation for ILRI and VSF-Belgium as well as the two donors involved. For example, ILRI won from the partnership as it received research funds from DFID's Animal Health Project without the need for match-funding either from their core budget or another research donor. Indeed, in this particular example, the research component was €25,000 out of a total cost of €1,500,000; the lion's share of the costs were met by the Belgium Survival Fund (BSF), which were allocated to VSF-Belgium to undertake TLDP II activities. VSF-Belgium also won because they received a significant amount of development funds and were able to use DFID's input as matched funding; again, as with ILRI, negating the need to find another donor willing to match-fund or using their own core funds to undertake the research. In addition, VSF-Belgium won as they were able to draw on the scientific expertise and infrastructure of a leading international research institute. Likewise, DFID was extremely happy to be part of a €1,500,000 million project whilst contributing only €25,000 from their budget. BSF also won by having their development project scientifically backstopped by ILRI. Furthermore, in all four cases, each organisation was able to share costs and save funds in achieving a joint goal; funds which could be used for another project/activity.

Access to emergency relief funds for research purposes

As part of the COOPI Consortium, ILRI helped to secure part of €2,350,000 received from ECHO's Drought Response Project; which was deployed across nine Districts in Northern Kenya, in 2005. ILRI's groundbreaking access to emergency relief funds was secured on the basis that ILRI and its collaborators would assess the impacts of the DRP. In addition, ILRI also secured EU emergency funds to provide ECF epidemiology expertise in Southern Sudan.

ILRI's research & development activities

ILRI's research and development activities, brought about either directly through the partnership agreement or through the improved interface with the INGO community, are comprised of: studies undertaken in Turkana, Kenya, designed to develop insights and recommendations that would inform TLDP II; research and development activities associated with VSF-Belgium's establishment of Livestock Farmer Field Schools in Turkana, Kenya, and; studies undertaken to assess the impact of ECHO's DRP.

Research activities undertaken to inform the development and implementation of TLDP II include: a review of VSF-Belgium's recent destocking intervention in 2005; the development of Farmer Field School (FFS) tools for illiterate pastoralists; development of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation tools for pastoralists; a comparative study on how to integrate the participatory approaches of FFS with the conventional Community Animal Health Worker (CAHW) approaches; a livestock market access and market opportunities study; a livelihoods diversification study; an assessment of the likely impact of climate change on grazing and browse dynamics, livestock numbers and species herd composition, and; an animal health study. Research undertaken as part of the partnership encompassed technological, social and institutional innovations.

Technological innovations included the utilisation of highly technical outputs from global climate change models, the use of sophisticated models to estimate grazing and browse dynamics for a range of climate change scenarios, and the utilisation of GPS and basic GIS technology for the collection, analysis and presentation of spatial data. Social innovations included an initial analysis of the societal transition from subsistence livestock-based livelihoods to market-oriented livestock-based and non-livestock-based livelihoods. The FFS approach was also deployed to encourage pastoralists to identify and prioritise their key livelihood challenges and, in partnership with both ILRI and VSF-Belgium staff, to search for appropriate strategies to successfully addressing those challenges and improve their livelihoods. The inclusion of PM&E was deemed central to the process of pastoralists' identifying and prioritising what they deemed as their major challenges and in the process of identifying successful milestones and outcomes and how they would know when their milestones and ultimate outcomes had been achieved.

Ultimately, ILRI catalysed the development of LFFS Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation (PM&E) guidelines and learning tools for illiterate pastoralists and will shortly undertake a comparative study of FFS and Community Animal Health Worker (CAHW) approaches to animal health care. Using an actor network theory (ANT) approach, ILRI personnel evaluated VSF-Belgium's destocking intervention of 2005. Particular attention was paid to whether or not the institutional and process dynamics of

the intervention were efficient and effective in achieving VSF-Belgium's stated goals. Part of the research work included highlighting of institutional gaps and poor institutional performance, and recommendations for improving the institutional and process dynamics for subsequent destocking interventions. In addition to the explicit research, monitoring and evaluation activities, ILRI assisted VSF-Belgium in the process of establishing 50 FFS and trained field staff in the use of GPS and GIS. In an exciting development, a significant level of interest has arisen from all stakeholder groups to hold one or more Project workshops in Lodwar, Turkana; in order to benefit from the findings of their research and, indeed, to contribute to the final versions of the various reports. Invitations have also been made to other VSF organisations and the FAO to share in pastoralist PM&E development process; specifically, invitations were circulated widely for the PM&E workshop held in Nairobi, Kenya, in September, 2006. ILRI is also exploring the possibility of entering similar innovative research for development partnerships with other livestock-based emergency and development organisations. The market access work produced recommendations for strengthening and scaling-up successful pilot institutional innovations and creating new institutional structures to increase the pro-poor benefits of future emergency and development-based interventions. Couched in grass-root insights, recommendations are made as to how to improve livestock market access in Turkana and re-apportion value-added in livestock marketing chains. Pastoralists and livestock traders alike have also highlighted potential innovative approaches that have the potential to develop into viable pathways out of poverty.

Research activities undertaken by ILRI, and related personnel, as part of the Drought Response Programme in Northern Kenya, included an assessment of: the likely impacts of drought induced veterinary and water interventions on human and social capital and livelihood coping strategies of pastoralists; the effects of water interventions on livelihoods and the environment; the epidemiological impacts; the economic the impacts, and key spatial characteristics.

Conclusion

Since the creation of the partnership between ILRI and VSF-Belgium, there has been increased cohesion of, and knowledge flow through, an expanding community of practice devoted to the improvement of pastoralist livelihoods in the Horn of Africa. However, productive partnerships have high costs. Successful partnerships are based on constant and high quality contact/communication and the dogged determination to ensure that everyone is speaking the same language and that consensus is achieved on the value of particular activities and approaches and the way forward. Understanding needs on the ground, local constraints and opportunities, key stakeholder needs, and the aspirations of researchers and the limitations of research is essential. Given the substantial challenges still facing pastoralist and pastoralism in the Horn of Africa, it is essential that successful partnership experiences are presented in regional and international fora. Against a backdrop of declining support for R&D in the agricultural sector, it is especially important to show-case the potential of innovative funding mechanisms, which illustrate how research, development and emergency funds can be used to promote R4D partnership that contribute to sustainable poverty alleviation. It is critically important to expand & strengthen existing R4D networks to enhance the creation & bidirectional flow of critical

knowledge to improve the type, targeting & coordination of future research, development & emergency interventions into livestock-based livelihood systems across the Horn of Africa.

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