

ILRI's Capacity Strengthening Initiatives and Opportunities For Collaboration with GO-FAU Program

P. Anandajayasekera, Manager, Capacity Strengthening Unit (ILRI)

Introduction

The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) is one of 15 future harvest centers, which conduct food and environmental research to help alleviate poverty and increase food security while protecting the natural resource base. Building on three decades of experience, ILRI works at the crossroads of livestock and poverty by bringing high quality science and capacity building to bear on poverty reduction and sustainable development. As part of its research-based outreach and capacity strengthening, ILRI assists its partners by offering opportunities for long- and short-term training for researchers and development practitioners.

Capacity is the engine for enhancing the output and performance of individuals and organizations. Therefore, high quality science and capacity strengthening are the core of ILRI's activities to achieve its overall goal. The capacity strengthening unit (CaSt) is designed to build and strengthen the scientific knowledge and capabilities of ILRI's partners in developing countries to enhance the capacity to innovate within the livestock sector.

In this report, an attempt is made to outline the current activities of the capacity strengthening unit, and the strategic priorities of the proposed capacity strengthening strategy of ILRI. In addition, a number of on-going and planned activities are identified as starting point for our deliberation to establish a mutually productive collaborative work program with GO-FAU program.

Current Capacity Strengthening Activities of ILRI

ILRI's research portfolio comprises of four themes and a Systemwide Program:

- Targeting and Innovations; How can livestock contribute to pathways out of poverty?
- Improving Market Opportunities;
- Using Biotechnologies to Secure Livestock Assets;
- People, Livestock and the Environment;
- Systemwide Livestock Program of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

Learning opportunities are offered within these broad research areas as well as other emerging issues such as: identifying livelihood interventions to reduce vulnerability and sustainability of livestock dependent households in Africa; livestock-based adaptation to the impacts of climate change; intensification of smallholder mixed crops livestock production systems; market and value chain analysis to enhance access to market for small holder farmers; and facing the challenges of emerging diseases in the changing livestock systems.

The capacity strengthening unit (CaSt) of ILRI is designed to build and strengthen the scientific knowledge and technical capacity of ILRI's partners in developing countries. The objective of the Unit is to contribute to the mission of ILRI, through strengthening the capacity of individuals, organizations and systems to apply the skills and resources to accomplish their goals, satisfy the needs of the stakeholders and to improve the performance and impact of the livestock sector.

ILRI's capacity building initiatives are based on the following five principles:

- Broad participation and a client-driven agenda;
- Building on local capabilities;
- On-going learning and adaptation;
- Long term commitment and partnerships; and,
- Integration of activities to address complex problems.

ILRI is not a university nor a training college and therefore guards against providing courses which could be offered by other institutions. The strength and advantage that ILRI presents for learning is its strong research base. Training at ILRI stresses practical work (both in the field and laboratory), team/group work, experiential learning, and personal development.

ILRI offers individual and group training courses. Both are aimed at largely building the capacity of individuals. Some of the group training may be in an institutional context but this is not very systematic. However, there are also some recent capacity building activities within projects (ASARECA Network, Biosciences for Eastern and Central Africa, and Improving Productivity and Market Success project in Ethiopia) that are meant to enhance ILRI's ability to strengthen both institutional as well as individual capacities.

Individual Training

This type of training is focused on harnessing the skills and abilities of individuals to contribute to the realization of developmental goals, which may include improved livestock management systems and enhanced research output. ILRI has five categories of individual trainees; Attachment Associate, Student Associate, Technical Associate, Research Fellow, and Graduate Fellow.

- **Attachment Associates** are university or polytechnic students who come to ILRI for a period of up to three months as a requirement of their course. ILRI identifies opportunities for work attachments and relays this to any enquiring institution.
- **Student Associates** are young students from either developed or developing countries (usually doing their first degree), who work on an established ILRI research program for a period of up to six months. Applications may be made by individuals but must be endorsed by their university.
- **Technical Associates** are technical or scientific staff from the NARS who come to ILRI at the request of their employer for a period of up to six months. The candidates' employer includes a statement of the techniques or methods the trainee has to learn.
- **Research Fellows** are staff scientists of universities and research institutes in developing countries, who undertake non-degree related training on research issues and methodologies for a period of up to 18 months. Nominations come from the employer of the applicant.
- **Graduate Fellows** are NARS employees undertaking M.Sc. or Ph.D. studies, who are required to work on a project related to existing ILRI research protocols for a period of up to three years. ILRI scientists identify projects within their existing or planned research protocols that are suitable for Graduate Fellows. ILRI strives to select the best and most appropriate applicant (considering both academic excellence and their ability to further ILRI's collaboration and research goals).

Group Training

ILRI's group training programs are focused on the staff of the NARS; particularly those working with ILRI associated networks and institutes with a mandate to train livestock scientists and policy makers. Group training courses are often offered in close collaboration with national and regional partners who have the mandate to pursue learning and capacity strengthening. The training of trainers is also used to build capacity. ILRI offers three categories of group training courses:

Core Courses are focused on building soft skills across program boundaries to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency and performance of R&D investments. NARS are encouraged to adopt/adapt these courses for their own use.

Program/project Courses are aimed at scientists and trainers who are involved with ILRI associated research themes. Course content is specific to the purpose and objectives of a particular research program, and is designed and implemented jointly by CaSt and the respective program.

Network Courses are targeted and tailor made for network partners. They are often initiated by a specific network and implemented by CaSt. Depending on the need, the network may decide to provide training on topics related to the mandate of ILRI but often specifically dealing with the purpose and objectives of the network.

In the past, CaSt activities were mainly focused on individual higher degree training for post-graduate students, but recently the focus is also on building capacity of institutes and organizations.

ILRI's Capacity Strengthening Strategy and Priorities

The proposed capacity strengthening strategy of ILRI is based on the mission, mandate and core competencies of ILRI; needs of our collaborating partners; emerging challenges within the livestock sector, and addresses the issues raised by the training impact study of CGIAR as well as the recommendations of the ILRI's Centre Commissioned External Review (CCER) and the External Program and Management Review (EPMR) reports. The key elements of the strategy have been reviewed and shaped by the participants of the multi stake holder workshops in four of the five sub-regions in Africa and Asia. The proposed strategy provides the flexibility to develop targeted programs for the five sub-regions based on the priorities identified and explicitly recognizes the inherent diversity in the capacity development needs. The strategy development and implementation processes are governed by a number of guiding principles. Activities are research based and guided by the principles of subsidiarity, value addition, and the comparative and competitive advantage of ILRI and its partners.

The spirit of the strategy is to undertake training and capacity strengthening activities and promote learning compatible with ILRI's research priorities and emerging issues and develop implementation of programs in ways that strengthen, mobilize and sustain capacities of livestock based systems to innovate. One of the key considerations in developing this strategy is the explicit integration of CaSt activities to ILRI's research programs, partnerships, communications and knowledge management. The goal, purpose, strategic objectives, and the key elements in operationalizing the proposed strategy are summarized below.

Mission and Purpose

The overall mission of the CaSt unit is to strengthen the capacity of the livestock R & D community to contribute to the mission of ILRI to achieve livestock-mediated poverty alleviation.

The purpose is to strengthen the capacity of ILRI's partners to apply their skills and resources to accomplish their goals, satisfy stakeholders' needs and improve performance and impact.

Strategic Objectives

Within the broader framework of ILRI's strategy to 2010 and proposed Medium Term Plan, the five strategic objectives to be pursued by the CaSt unit are:

Strategic Objective 1: Effective integration of CS activities into project planning, implementation and evaluation.

It is anticipated that in future, CaSt will play a pro-active role and participate in the design stage of the various projects to assist in the explicit identification of the CS activities and outputs, ensure that adequate resources are allocated for implementation and that mechanisms are put in place for quality assurance and feed back with relevant training-related outputs produced and widely disseminated where relevant the unit will directly get involved in the implementation of CS activities.

Strategic Objective 2: Building Sustainable Capacity of Institutes to build capacity (a major shift in focus).

CS is a continuous and dynamic process. The long term solution to address this need for continuous CS is to develop sustainable capacity within the relevant organizations selected strategically mandated to build capacity of the various stakeholder groups engaged in the livestock innovation systems. The proposed strategy focuses on four sets of inter related activities which can contribute to sustainable capacity building.

- Creation of sub-regional "hubs" or mechanisms.
- Facilitate the integration of research-based learning outputs (tools, methods, approaches, and results) into the curricula of learning institutions
- Training of trainers
- Participating in on-going/planned external strategic CS activities. ILRI will contribute to the livestock component of these initiatives

Strategic Objective 3:

3.1 Testing, adapting, and implementing innovative training approaches and delivery mechanisms using ICT

ILRI will continue to provide a variety of training types, themes, and delivery modes to suit the heterogeneous needs of the stakeholders and sub-regions.

3.2 Development and dissemination of training materials.

The output of this strategic objective (3) will contribute to the generation of regional and global public goods.

Strategic Objective 4: Building Skills of Individuals and Groups

Post-graduate training will continue to be a priority activity, as it contributes significantly to the research agenda of ILRI and to the regional human resource pool. Every effort will be made to expand and diversify the graduate training program at ILRI.

With respect to group training every effort will be made to devolve the responsibility of implementing some of the on-going group training activities to our sub-regional and national

partners (where ILRI will continue to play the facilitating and catalytic role) while ILRI focusing its energy to develop and implement new “flagship” courses in collaboration with ILRI’s strategic partners both in the North and South.

The various activities will continue in priority areas, however they will be rationalized.

Strategic Objective 5: Developing a functional need-based monitoring and evaluation system to communicate with partners and to assess the performance and impact of CaSt.

The M & E system for CaSt will track resources allocated as well as the outputs and outcomes of capacity strengthening activities, assure quality and provide the necessary feed back to learn from experience.

Implementing the Strategic Plan

A number of steps will be taken in order to facilitate the implementation of the proposed strategy. These include:

- Establishing strategic partnerships – both internal and external
- Prioritizing the various needs identified through the sub-regional livestock need assessment studies
- Mobilizing resources – both human and financial
- Developing “flagship” courses to support livestock innovation systems
- Pilot case studies
- Monitoring and evaluation of capacity strengthening activities at ILRI
- An effective communication strategy for dissemination of outputs and best practices

The Medium Term Plan (MTP) and the annual work plan of CaSt will be guided by the strategic objectives and priorities identified by the sub-regional needs assessment studies. However, the actual portfolio of activities in any given time will be largely determined by the availability of additional resources and will be closely linked to the priorities of ILRI’s research themes. The MTP also will clearly identify the expected outputs and outcomes of CaSt activities. To keep it relevant and dynamic, the proposed strategy will be updated periodically to reflect the changing circumstances.

GO-FAU Program and ILRI’s Capacity Strengthening

All ILRI’s capacity strengthening activities are research based and guided by the principles of subsidiarity, value addition and comparative and competitive advantage. ILRI would like to reinforce and complement the ongoing national and regional initiatives through strategic collaborative partnerships.

ILRI believes that the long term solution to meet the continuous demand for capacity strengthening is to build sustainable training capacity within the national and regional agricultural learning institution. Therefore in principle ILRI is very supportive of the GO-FAU Program initiative. ILRI believes that within its broader mandate the most effective way to contribute to GO-FAU Program is through development and dissemination of modular and executive courses in areas where the current disciplinary based institutes are not engaged in; and to address the emerging challenges where the capacity is still lacking/emerging. ILRI could also be an intermediary in linking the ARI and the livestock innovation systems in the developing countries. The activities of GO-FAU Program are in line with three of the strategic objectives of ILRI. They are as follows:

- Facilitating the integration of research-based learning outputs (tools, methods, approaches and results) into the curricula of learning institutions.
- Training of trainers
- Participating in on-going activities to contribute to the livestock components of these initiatives
- Testing, adapting, and implementing innovative training approaches and delivery mechanisms using ICT
- Development and dissemination of training materials
- Building skills of individuals and groups through “flagship” courses

It is worth noting that all these initiatives are closely linked and aimed at building and sustaining capacity of institutions.

Based on the preliminary findings of the needs assessment studies and internal consultation, we have identified a number of potential candidates for module development and /or refinement.

- Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Assessment of R & D investments (on-going in collaboration with IFPRI-ISNAR)
- Capacity building for sustainable use of Animal Genetic Resources in Developing countries (on-going in collaboration with Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences)
- Biometrics and research methods teaching resource (available)
- Application of Innovation Systems Approach and Principles in Agricultural R & D and its implications— A learning module (in preparation)
- Participatory market oriented extension – a source book (in preparation, collaboration with CIAT)
- Management of gene bank (available)
- Poverty/vulnerability/risk analysis and sustainability in pastoral systems
- Climate change: Implications to livestock sector and adaptation strategies
- Value chain, market orientation and its implications to R & D (in collaboration with IFPRI)
- Crop – livestock – water interactions (potential partners are ICRISAT and IWMI)
- Participatory disease surveillance and preparedness for emerging diseases
- A training module for design, implementation and management of partnerships and networks for R & D (in preparation, collaboration with IFPRI-ISNAR)
- Participatory veterinary public health approaches to mitigating emerging diseases
- Participatory approaches to agricultural research for development (base material is available)
- Risk assessment and management of livestock products value chains for local and regional markets.
- Monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment of R & D investments and its implications for research management – An executive course for managers (in collaboration with IFPRI-ISNAR).

In addition, the on-going needs assessment studies in the five sub-regions will also provide additional inputs to identify and prioritize candidates for module development. The major emphasis will be placed on training materials development and training of trainers.

Conclusion

Based on the revised capacity strengthening strategy of ILRI, there are lot of synergies and complementarities between GO-FAU Program and the proposed CS activities of ILRI. A number

of areas have been identified for collective action. It is our sincere hope that these will form the basis for a meaningful dialogue for a productive and mutually rewarding partnership between ILRI and the GO-FAU program initiatives.