

Preliminary Draft:

Suggested GFAR learning trajectories

The independent review concluded GFAR is catalyzing transformative change in diverse corners of the global Agri-Food Research and Innovation yet may be expected to build on its strengths and do better. It also formulated a number of recommendations aimed at strengthening GFAR's role and performance. Some of these are straightforward and can be addressed by the Steering Committee or Secretariat directly. Others for their implementation depend on enhancing joint learning between the GFAR Steering Committee, the Secretariat and Partners.

To address the latter, the review team suggests GFAR incorporates three joint learning trajectories into its programming. A joint learning trajectory is understood as a *participatory process in which a range of GFAR partners walks a purposeful path of joint inquiry, learning and design towards enabling GFAR to become more effective in what they do*. Each joint learning trajectory may include various inter-related lines of inquiry, learning and design according to the learning objectives defined. Leadership for the learning trajectories may be shared between GFAR governing bodies, secretariat and key partners.

For each of the three joint learning trajectories preliminary suggestions are made with regard to purpose, lines of inquiry, learning and design, analytical approach and expected outputs and outcomes. In addition, possible instruments for use during the participatory process are listed. The proposed design will have to be fine tuned and further elaborated by a facilitation team in close collaboration with GFAR leadership and secretariat. The level and width of partner and/or public participation in each case needs to be aligned with the learning objectives and approach chosen and set within the context(s) in which each of the learning processes takes place. However, given GFAR strategic priorities active participation of Farmer Organizations, YPARD and GAP may be considered of particular importance.

1.1. Joint Learning Trajectory A: GFAR Strategy, Focus and Visualization

In brief

The purpose of this learning trajectory is to jointly develop ways and means to strengthen the focus and communicate outcomes for GFAR to become a recognisable 'brand'. It starts with further specifying the GFAR strategy and theory of change; designing and implementing a system that harvests information relevant to monitoring and understanding progress on collective actions and, includes regular joint analysis, learning and reporting on outcomes and lessons learned, both internally and externally. Special interest (web) pages could serve as electronic platforms for information sharing and analysis for each of the GFAR outcome areas.

Lines of inquiry, learning and design

- 1) To formulate a more explicit and realistic *GFAR strategy* with a focus recognizable to all. This includes:
 - a) Defining a coherent, yet limited set of *outcome areas* – i.e. areas within Agri-Food Research and Innovation Systems where GFAR can be expected to be most effective in seeking transformation¹.
 - b) Specify measurable indicators for the transformative changes with regard to gender, smallholders, women and youth GFAR collective actions seek to catalyse, and how.
 - c) Drawing out experience-based lessons on how GFAR has been able to effectively contribute to transformation in these areas²; taking into account and where necessary, differentiating between different levels (national, regional and international) and contexts in which GFAR partners operate.
 - d) Using these lessons to further specify and contextualise *GFAR's theory of change*, that is, how GFAR is going to make a difference in these outcome areas. The ToC will in turn help identifying the highest leverage actions/initiatives GFAR should spearhead (as in a. above).
 - e) Defining clear selection criteria, success indicators, instruments, and resources to be applied by GFAR to supporting transformative collective actions, as defined in the new Charter.
- 2) To develop a *monitoring and visualisation system*³ for harvesting information on key outcomes of GFAR actions and their potential for transformative impact regularly, amongst others, including indicators developed under b) above. The monitoring and visualisation system should enable GFAR to harvest outcomes and jointly assess their strength in context⁴.
- 3) To design *interlinked participatory processes of outcome harvesting and analysis* at relevant levels within the networks to stimulate joint reflection and learning about effectiveness and potential impact of GFAR actions and, to be able to report on and communicate outcomes and lessons learned both internally, amongst the membership, and externally, towards the public at large.

Outputs

1. A GFAR Strategy and Theory of Change specific enough to guide strategic decision-making on priorities for supporting collective action and provides a basis for full transparency, accountability and learning from experience.
2. A monitoring system able to collect and visualise key outcomes and potential for impact, as input to joint reflection and outward communications.
3. An integrated, participatory process of harvesting and sharing outcomes between GFAR partners engaged in collective actions.
4. A reporting system that highlights outcomes and lessons learned, both internally and externally.

¹ The GCARD Road Map provides a solid basis, yet has not provided enough selectivity to develop clarity of focus that is understood by all.

² This Independent Review provides a starting point.

³ The monitoring system should make the outcomes of GFAR collective actions visible to the partners and to the world; not just as annual reports but presented in an interactive way to invite analysis and learning and, providing materials for external communication.

⁴ The instrument used during this review (4.4.3) may be considered to provide a basis for such an assessment.

Expected outcomes

- ✚ A more in-depth, shared understanding among GFAR partners of what Agri-Food Research and Innovation Systems are and how GFAR may contribute to their transformation.
- ✚ GFAR collective action for transformative change in Agri-Food Research and Innovation Systems widely recognized as a 'brand'.

1.2. Joint Learning Trajectory B: Capitalizing on GFAR collective actions

In brief

Aim is to improve the capitalization of, and learning from, results of collective actions GFAR partners have undertaken. GFAR as a catalyst of multi-stakeholder collaboration understands its collective actions as being partner-driven initiatives for transformative change. This learning trajectory allows GFAR and its partners to learn from experience and to develop a more in-depth understanding of how collective initiatives emerge, how they get organised and take off, what type of support they might need at which stage and, what transformative changes they effectively contribute to. It requires choosing a reduced number of collective actions, distributed over key outcome areas, for joint reflection and learning. Besides, de-centralised (methodological) knowledge hubs are to be created from where joint reflection is organised and facilitated and lessons learned are synthesized, documented and communicated. Such knowledge hubs would preferably be created and hosted by key GFAR partners, with expertise in a particular outcome area.

Lines of inquiry, learning and design

- 1) To organize *joint stocktaking exercises* for a number of on-going collective actions to bring out their contributions to transformative change in Agricultural Research and Innovation Systems and the lessons learned with regard to the financial, technical and methodological support they needed to achieve their mission⁵.
- 2) To organize *joint workshops across various collective actions*, for exchange, learning, and documenting of lessons learned between the different teams involved in stocktaking.
- 3) To organize *de-centralized (methodological) knowledge hubs*⁶ able to facilitate continuous joint reflection, documentation and in-depth understanding of how best to organize, support and implement collective actions for transforming Agricultural Research and Innovation Systems within a particular context.
- 4) Where possible, consider translating key synthesis documents produced from above lines of inquiry, learning and design in several languages so they can be shared widely among the GFAR partners and networks.

Outputs

⁵ A good example of such an exercise is documented as 'Ten years of promoting farmer-led innovation: Taking stock of achievement of the Prolinnova Global Partnership Programme and Network. KIT/Amsterdam: Prolinnova International Secretariat, 2015.

⁶ Such a knowledge hub may be driven and hosted by a committed partner or regional platform and 'anchored' with a staff member at the GFAR Secretariat.

1. Documented joint stocktaking exercises – coverage of key outcome areas to be ensured; number yet to be determined in accordance with staff and resource availability.
2. Documented joint reflection and learning workshops across collective actions – linkages across key collective actions and outcome areas to be ensured. Number as in (1.) above.
3. One operational (methodological) knowledge hub per key outcome area, hosted and driven by key GFAR partners and anchored within the GFAR Secretariat.

Expected outcomes

- ✚ Accelerated learning amongst GFAR partners with regard to GFAR's role and how to be effective as a catalyst for transformative change in Agri-Food Research and Innovation Systems worldwide.
- ✚ Practical insights in how to continuously improve upon the facilitation of and support to GFAR collective actions, their outcomes and potential for impact.

1.3. Joint Learning Trajectory C: Professionalize

In brief

Aim is to start to develop a professional learning culture within GFAR. This includes organizing a GFAR 'Global Learning Lab' where strategic, thematic and methodological lessons learned can be brought together, synthesised and documented, and ways to further improve GFAR's role and effectiveness can be designed; further professionalising GFAR's approach by incorporating lessons learned and linking up the thematic knowledge hubs to the work of GFAR partners systematically. Besides, the Lab supports the production of materials for sharing lessons learned and results achieved with external audiences.

- 1) Equip and organize a GFAR *Global Learning Lab*, linking up the various decentralized knowledge hubs and integrating the strategic, thematic and methodological lessons learned in order to build a professional understanding of what it means to assemble, design, organize and support collective actions aiming to 'catalyze Agri-Food Research and Innovation System transformation'.
- 2) *Incorporate lessons learned* under A. and B. in GFAR's approach and methodology for supporting collective actions; assess the complementarity between the current five lines of activity and support instruments used, to build and socialize a professional understanding of how these instruments are to be applied to (1) creating opportunities for network articulation and matchmaking; (2) knowledge and information sharing and use; (3) partnership development, (4) collective advocacy and, (5) transforming institutions.
- 3) Facilitate the emergence of *thematic knowledge hubs* in key thematic areas where GFAR and its partners have achieved significant progress through collective actions, such as Foresight; Promoting/Financing Local Innovation and Agri-Food Systems, Partnerships for Impact, preferably by encouraging and supporting committed partners to host and drive such a hub.
- 4) Develop an *information/communication platform* to allow for systematic matchmaking and follow up of partner initiatives and to provide regular feedback and information on strategic choices made, to the partners and wider membership.

Specify incentives for partners to actively engage in matchmaking and design of collective action initiatives.

Outputs

1. One GFAR Global Learning Lab, a space for building a professional understanding of what it means to catalyse transformative change in Agri-Food Research and Innovation Systems and how GFAR action can be improved.
2. Thematic knowledge hubs hosted and driven by key partners in key thematic areas where GFAR collective actions have achieved significant leverage for institutional change.
3. A common information/communication platform for matchmaking and follow up on multi-stakeholder initiatives by GFAR partners and members.

Expected outcomes

- ✚ A widely shared understanding among GFAR partners of what it means to catalyse transformative change in Agri-Food Research and Innovation Systems and how GFAR action can be improved.
- ✚ A more widely shared leadership culture at GFAR: “It’s the move from single point leadership to dynamic, multiple-point leadership where the responsibility for creating, prioritizing, executing, learning, and pivoting is vested on multiple individuals.” Source: <https://medium.com/21st-century-organizational-development/purpose-in-a-complex-world-800cfd8cab3>
- ✚ A more pro-active partner engagement: partners take the initiative and drive matchmaking and design of collective actions, effectively supported by the GFAR Secretariat and Steering Committee.

1.4. Some additional instruments and tools available to support joint inquiry, learning and design

- 1) <http://www.sprockler.com> - a web-based designer, collector, visualisation and joint analysis tool, amongst others, for harvesting, contextualizing, visualising and joint analysis of stories.
- 2) www.mentimeter.com - a web-based facilitation tool for, amongst others, drawing out and prioritizing issues (for ex. lessons learned) with medium-sized or large groups.
- 3) www.sas2.net - a suite of participatory learning and action tools based on systems thinking and tested globally
- 4) www.basecamp.com – a web-based organization tool that could be used by Secretariat to organize communication, projects and collective actions, this tool allows external users to connect – integrated live chat, group calendar, timelines, and email. Low cost with non-for profit discount.
- 5) <https://www.innocentive.com/> - a platform that links problems to solvers - a Challenge Driven Innovation™ methodology and purpose-built technology results in fresh thinking and cost-effective problem solving.
- 6) <http://www.bibalex.org/search4dev/document/422848> - Facilitating Innovation for Development, A RAAKS Resource Box – a participatory action-research approach and methodology for understanding and designing change in agricultural and rural research and innovation systems -

http://ccsl.wikispaces.com/file/view/RAAKS_Dossier_KIT.pdf/526924092/RAAKS_Dossier_KIT.pdf

7) Participatory Action Research (PAR) Sources & Hubs:

a) Statistical Service Centre at the University of Reading
<http://www.reading.ac.uk/ssc/index.php>:

b) Institute of Development Studies (IDS), at the University of Sussex:
<http://www.ids.ac.uk/go/research-teams/participation-team/research-themes/participatory-methodologies>:

c) Wordpress: <https://participaction.wordpress.com/field-notes/par-methods/>
Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR), Centre for Development Innovation: <https://www.wur.nl/en/Expertise-Services/Research-Institutes/centre-for-development-innovation/Action-Oriented-Research.htm>

DRAFT