



PROJECT DURAS

*Promotion du Développement Durable dans les systèmes de Recherche Agricole du Sud
Promoting Sustainable Development in Agricultural Research Systems*

DURAS 2nd Project Leaders' Workshop

28 February -02 March 2008

Agropolis International

Montpellier, France

WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS

I. Background

A. Project Overview

The main objective of the DURAS Project is to contribute to strengthening the involvement of southern stakeholders in the agricultural research process and ensuring that their voices are heard at the international level.

Its three components include: (1) Support to the facilitation role of the GFAR Secretariat, particularly its efforts in strengthening Regional Fora, in strategic agenda and research priority setting as well as in enabling relevant stakeholders such as NGOs, farmer groups and small and medium agri-enterprises to actively participate in the ARD process; (2) Enhancing the electronic GFAR (EGFAR) and development of Regional Agricultural Information Systems (RAIS); and (3) Implement a Competitive Grants Systems (CGS) to encourage and promote innovation as well as to contribute to enhancing scientific capacity southern partners in ARD.

Launched in April 2004, this three-year project with a total budget of Euro 4 million funded by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs is jointly being implemented by the GFAR Secretariat in Rome and by Agropolis International in Montpellier.

B. DURAS Competitive Grants Scheme

The DURAS Competitive Grants Scheme (CGS) aims to encourage and promote innovation as well as to scale up innovative practices in ARD developed in the south; and to enhance scientific capacity southern partners. This component accounts for 50% (i.e., 2 million euros) of the total DURAS project funds. Two Calls for Proposals on four priority themes¹ identified by GFAR stakeholders were launched in 2004.

Of the 302 submissions received, 12 were selected for funding on the basis of criteria that favors a balance among project feasibility, innovation, socio-economic consideration; sustainability considerations and partnership quality. In fact, if there is one thing which makes DURAS innovative, it is the premium accorded to multi-stakeholder partnership. DURAS is built around the essence of GFAR which privileges the development of research partnership among various actors, with particular attention to the involvement of non-traditional players in the research process, i.e. the NGOs and farmers organizations. As such, all the 12 projects involve a

¹ These themes include (1) Agrobiodiversity and genetic resources management for food security; (2) Local knowledge in natural resources management; (3) Agroecology and other sustainable farming practices; and (4) Linking farmers to market and support to agri-SMEs.

minimum of two countries from the South and a European collaborator. Each project also involves at least three types of stakeholder groups, one of which is an NGO, farmers' organizations, or small-medium enterprise. The 12 projects started in October 2005. The award size varies from Euro 90,000 to Euro 150,000 over a period of two-years.

II. Workshop Objectives

The workshop aimed at bringing together coordinators and participants in DURAS-supported projects to share information about the progress achieved one year after implementation; to collectively take stock of lessons learned; to discuss emerging project contribution to sustainable development and the indicators which can be used to measure it; and to discuss plans and strategies for next steps.

III. Workshop Design

The workshop was divided into four sessions: Sharing, Learning and Exchange; Towards contributing to sustainable development; Project implementation and partnership; and Moving forward.

Each session involved presentations followed by open discussions. Two working group sessions focused on lessons learned where participants were divided into three groups to discuss (a) local knowledge; (b) filiere approach; and (c) partnership. The other working group session was about revisiting each project's sustainable development indicators. The outcome of the DURAS mid-term project review as well as the draft concept note on DURAS Phase 2 were also presented and discussed by the participants. At the end of the workshop, two members of the DURAS Scientific Partnership Committee shared their over-all views and impression about the progress made to date. Guided visit to the historic center of Montpellier was also organized.

Oliver Oliveros of the DURAS Project Office facilitated the workshop. Mireille Montes de Oca provided administrative and logistical support. Paul Benezit, an ENSAM stagiaire, also assisted during the workshop. Simultaneous interpretation (English-French-English) was likewise provided.

IV. Workshop Results and Conclusions

A. Opening Session

Dr. Jean-Francois Giovannetti (Ministry of Foreign Affairs-France) opened the Workshop. He highlighted the importance of integrative research which is in effect being carried out in the 12 projects given its trans-disciplinary nature and which, in the case of some projects, takes into account local knowledge. He also underscored the importance of the workshop in view of the results of the DURAS mid-term external review. He announced the extension of project duration (without additional funding) until end of March 2008 and stressed the importance of linking with French Embassies at the country level as well as with the SCAC (Service de coopération et d'action culturelle) in each country. Likewise, Giovannetti affirmed MAE's interest in innovative CGS as a tool to promote research partnership.

For his part, GFAR interim Executive Secretary Abdelmajid Slama spoke about the global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) and highlighted the need to mainstream DURAS approach in NARS. Meanwhile, Dr. Henri Carsalade, president of Agropolis International, welcomed the participants. He emphasized the importance of each project given their potential to contribute to achieving the Millennium Development goals (MDGs) given the relevance of project activities

which are being carried out in partnership with relevant stakeholders both from the south and from the north as well as with civil society organizations.

Mr. Oliveros presented the Workshop Objectives and Expected Outputs as well as the Workshop Programme. Self-introduction of workshop participants followed.

B. Session 1: Sharing, Learning and Exchange

The 12 Project Coordinators presented their respective initiative highlighting: (1) project content; (2) emerging results; (3) partnership dimension; and (4) challenges encountered in project implementation. A 15-minute discussion followed after every three presentations.

The following issues have been raised by the workshop participants in the ensuing discussion:

- Communication and exchange. While a number of DURAS projects are being carried out in a given country, e.g. 3 in Vietnam, 2 in Cameroon, 2 in Benin, 2 in Burkina Faso, etc., project leaders do not necessarily communicate with each other. Project leaders were strongly encouraged to link up with each other in order to facilitate exchange of experience and results across projects that are being implemented in the same country.
- Involvement of agri-SMES. Participants are aware of the need to effectively involve small and medium agro-enterprises particularly in research projects that involves the whole “filier” (e.g. as in the case of projet Banane, Pig Project, Malto-sorgho project, etc.). Participants also raised the issue of how to ensure that SMEs involved in the project will share knowledge and technology developed with other SMEs thereby promoting cooperation instead of competition.
- Mainstreaming innovative approaches. All the 12 projects are deemed innovative. Of big concern is how innovative approaches being espoused in each of the projects can be mainstreamed and/or integrated in the regular activities of NARS and other organizations involved in the project.
- Local knowledge. How can local knowledge be best used as a take off point in doing research, how can these traditional knowledge feed into research? Project participants were keen to learn what changes took place after new technologies have been introduced using local knowledge as a starting point. How can one better understand local knowledge and therefore local communities? Many argued that there is no single recipe in approaching local communities and in understanding their local knowledge. While there is a need to work on indigenous technical knowledge, researchers are not often used, let alone equipped, to work on such issues.
- Enhancing farmer involvement in research. Participants recognize the importance of greater farmer involvement in research but *how* to do it effectively and efficiently has been a concern expressed by many during the workshop. In activities such as participatory varietal selection, community involvement is of great importance. How to facilitate identification of needs of local communities and adjust varietal selection criteria to improve research which responds to their needs?
- Making project results accessible. The need not only to make available technologies being developed at the community level, i.e. to farmer-producers, but to involve local communities in technology development was a recurring issue during the workshop. This not only empowers local communities but promotes ownership of research as well.

- Research ownership and Intellectual Property (IP) management. Some DURAS projects may lead to some discoveries or research finding which may have to be properly managed. While DURAS projects are using public funds, research results should generally be made available in the public domain. However, some participants have expressed concern on how best to manage research results especially if these will have implication on using such results for commercial exploitation.
- Synergy with other projects. In a number of cases, the DURAS-supported projects are building into the results of other related projects being carried by organizations involved in the project. For example, the Crop-Livestock project is building on the MSEC Project being supported by ADB which is being implemented in several SEA countries. The same is true for the Pig Project which is coordinating with the MALICA Project (Markets and Agriculture linkages for cities of Asia).
- Inter-disciplinary project teams. Project teams are largely inter-disciplinary – working with researchers from various fields of knowledge (i.e., from agronomy to sociology). They are also working with NGOs, with university students and other local actors

C. Session 2: Towards contributing to sustainable development

The session on *Project's contribution to sustainable development* started with presentation from Mr. Michel Pieyre (Conseil General d'Herault). Mr. Pieyre's presentation focused on the experience of the Herault Department in developing its local Agenda 21 and the corresponding indicators being used in order to measure local sustainable development.

Following the introductory presentation, the participants were divided into four groups corresponding to the four thematic focus of the DURAS CGS projects. Each group was requested to revisit their respective SD indicators which they have developed in October 2005 during the 1st DURAS Project Leaders' Workshop with the end in view of coming up with a revised and improved list which takes into account current experience and emerging results. Each group then presented their outputs with the rest of the participants providing comments and suggestions.

D. Session 3: Project implementation and partnership

The 3rd Session was about Project implementation and partnership building. During this session, participants shared, in plenary, experiences, lessons learned and views on the issues which they deemed important. These issues include: (1) communication; (2) research platforms and networks; (3) promotion of research ownership and (4) mainstreaming DURAS approaches and activities.

On communication

- Need to enhance internal and external communication of the DURAS projects.
 - Use of video to document experience. This can also be used in communicating project activities to prospective donors and to other stakeholders involved in other DURAS projects in other countries. Professional support may be needed to realize this.
 - Pamphlets and brochures need to be developed
 - Contact with local press should be made and enhanced. Invite them to the field and request them to publish articles about the project in local newspapers
 - Develop and enhance website. Current project website can be used to facilitate and foster communication across the 12 projects and also to use it as a repository of documents and research results
- Projects need to publish not only scientific results but also about the development side of their activities

- Support to project documentation and publication is needed by the projects
- Need to foster co-publication among actors involved in the project, e.g. between researchers and farmers. Anglophone countries are beginning to encourage such types of publications. Their francophone counterparts can certainly learn from such example.

On research platforms and networks

- Some projects are resulting to the development of research networks (e.g. Nematology and Mycology research network in the Maghreb sub-region; network of Inoculation laboratories in West and Central Africa, etc.)
- 3rd DURAS workshop should be further opened to other stakeholders working in ARD in order to further promote exchange of experiences and knowledge on the dynamics of partnership, local innovation, research, etc.
- Promote research-development-education/training linkage
 - Need to promote reforms in agricultural education curriculum in order to create an enabling environment to promote innovation
 - Conduct an inventory of universities and other institutions who are already into this type of activities

On promotion of research ownership

- Ownership and transfer of results is important to farmers. This should be carefully taken into account in project monitoring and evaluation (M&E).
- Who owns research results or research discovers when a project is being carried out by multiple partners and being financed through public funds? Should a certain discovery cannot be patented for various reasons (e.g., public funding is used to finance research), how can a proper recognition/acknowledgment be given to the concerned researcher/research team? This is the case of the NEMATUS Project which seems to have detected a new organism through its current scientific research. Legal advice from the MAE Legal Office is to be sought in this respect.
- What are the various means of protecting intellectual property (IP)? High cost of patenting hinders some producer organizations to proceed with such legal process
- Researchers would need further information and perhaps training on IP management

On mainstreaming DURAS approaches and activities

- Tap the private sector and other enterprises in supporting future activities especially if such enterprises are influencing the environment
- What shall be the place of the 12 projects in the second phase of DURAS? Will a fusion of projects with similar or complementary approaches, methodologies and emerging research results be possible? How can this be pursued?

E. Session 4: Moving forward

The 4th Session focused on the DURAS mid-term External Review as well as the Concept Note of DURAS Phase 2. Each of the presentation was followed by general discussion. Mr. Hugues de Cherisey, external consultant, presented the outcome of DURAS mid-term Review. The review was generally favorable. DURAS is found to be a high quality project which operationalizes concepts (e.g., innovative research partnership) which have been the object of debate for years. It is deemed innovative but is complex and insufficiently known. It was strongly suggested that DURAS pursue a more proactive communication and marketing strategy in order to further lend the project and the activities it support more visibility at the global, regional and local levels. Toward this end, it should enhance linkage with SCAC and with local actors in ARD. It should also start developing its strategies for Phase 2.

M. de Cherisey highlighted the need to evaluate the results and emerging impacts of components 1 and 2 of the DURAS project. As regards the 3rd component which largely concerns the 12 projects, he suggested an enhanced collective work among actors involved in the joint reflection

on cross-cutting themes, develop a system that will facilitate the flow of information among project participants particularly at the community level (e.g. use of video) and develop/improve M&E system. Over-all project extension up to mid-2008 was also proposed in order for the 12 projects to wrap up their respective activities. Some quick comments generated by the presentation include the following:

- For each project, highlight complementary funding being received in order to project that DURAS is complementing other donors in carrying out the initiative
- Participants expressed appreciation of the innovative feature of the DURAS project which deliberately forces researchers and CSOs to work together
- Researchers are traditionally evaluated (and therefore promoted) on the basis of their publications. How to encourage co-publication with CSOs? Experience from Anglophone countries may provide ideas on how to proceed
- Researchers are less and less encouraged to work on development issues. There is less and less acknowledgement and recognition for this type of activity and it is posing some problems/constraints for those working in ARD
- It would be interesting for each project to present in a table/graph the time it took them to construct, let alone deepen, partnership in the project. DURAS should document partnership experience of each of the 12 projects.

Meanwhile, Mr. Oliveros presented the current draft of the DURAS Phase 2 Concept Note. Highlighted during the presentation are the following components which may make up the 2nd phase of the project: (1) Consolidation of experience and lessons learned from Phase 1 – to include analysis of experience from the first phase and transform these into policy briefs for advocacy purposes; (2) An innovative Competitive Grants Scheme linked to Regional Fora and with expanded geographic coverage – on themes largely be based on identified regional research priorities; and (3) A set of accompanying measures such as support to implementing regional priorities, support to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), capacity building, as well as support to unforeseen micro-valorizations of several ideas or outcome emanating from the projects that are not foreseen at the time of planning the second phase.

Oliveros also mentioned that another feature of DURAS 2 will be its multi-donor nature. A multi-donor DURAS 2 provides an attractive platform for a concerted donor effort in supporting innovation in ARD.

Ensuring discussion generated the following questions and suggestions from the participants:

- What type of support will be extended to the first generation of DURAS-funded projects? Will a fusion of complementary projects or those with complementary emerging results (e.g., research methodologies) be an option?
- Provide support to facilitate and encourage projects addressing cross-cutting issues. Consider a special Call for Proposal under Phase 2 involving only the 12 projects in an effort to promote and encourage integration of initiatives and valorize (emerging) complementary results. This can be a way of supporting future activities of (some of) the 12 projects.
- Component on supporting CSOs was welcomed by the participants. Will DURAS 2 be in a position to provide assistance to farmer producers in their effort to consolidate their group?
- Longer time frame for projects to be supported under future Calls for Proposals (e.g. 3 years with possible extension)
- Link DURAS thematic focus with other issues which may attract the donor community (e.g., HIV/AIDS, vulnerable groups, poverty)

- Promotion of research-development-training/education linkage in Phase 2.
- Work towards better representation of southern countries in project governance
- Some projects have clear ideas on how to upscale their initiatives. Too much emphasis on methodologies may compromise having concrete project impact on the ground. DURAS 2 should work towards scaling up and respond to the expectations being expressed on the ground.
- Each of the projects has been encouraged to mobilize complementary funding since project extension does not come with additional funding from MAE-France. Projects have been encouraged to tap embassies and SCAC and explore possible collaboration with them as regards the future project undertaking.
- Researchers from the South need to be more proactive and should be able to anticipate future research needs and act on them as quickly
- Develop a discussion paper on the main lessons learned for the DURAS Project, with inputs from the 12 projects
- Conduct a stakeholder analysis to gauge, more or less, the interaction of actors and to what extent are they functionally involved in the projects.

Feedback from the members of the DURAS Scientific Partnership Committee (SPC)

Two members of the DURAS SPC, Prof. Bernard Guerin (ACTIA) and Sonia Ramonteau (ACTA), participated during the course of the three-day workshop. Towards the end of the activity, they have been requested to share their impressions on the 12 projects as well as the workshop in general .

Ramonteau highlighted the openness of the participants to share and listen to each other. She expressed appreciation on the collective learning that took place and was impressed by the results achieved so far considering that the 12 projects have just been implemented for just over a year. She also underscored the importance of highlighting the partnership dimension of each of the projects.

For his part, Prof. Guerin has expressed satisfaction on the 12 projects. He also appreciated the courage displayed by DURAS in undergoing a mid-term evaluation. Such step he considered to be original. He noted the challenge of developing indicators stating that what is important is also to take note of the trends and evaluate project on the basis of where it started, thus implying the importance of benchmarking. He also expressed the need to communicate externally and internally. Likewise, Prof. Guerin stressed that in order for innovative approaches to be sustainable, DURAS2 should not forget research-development-education/training linkage while highlighting the need to bring on board the youth in the process as well as universities which need to be convinced of the need to introduce agricultural education reforms to make it more conducive towards innovation. On behalf of the DURAS SPC, Prof. Guerin congratulated the DURAS Project Coordinator and the whole DURAS Team for a very satisfactory job of organizing and facilitating the workshop.

In his closing remarks, M. Giovannetti thanked everyone for their participation. He mentioned that the DURAS Project is, to a certain extent, beginning to influence the way by which some global players in ARD like the CGIAR is operating as exemplified by the recent Annual General Meeting 2006 (AGM 2006) which took place in December in Washington where a CSO Day has been organized as well as in the current CGIAR-CSO Competitive Grants. He ended by enjoining the

12 projects to contact SCAC in their respective countries and inform them about their respective project.

V. Workshop Evaluation

At the end of the Workshop, participants were requested to fill-up the Workshop Evaluation Form. Most of the participants find the Workshop Sessions very useful. A number of them have singled out the session on sharing, learning and exchange to be among the most important aspects of the workshop, along with discussion on project implementation. They have also appreciated learning more about the emerging results of each of the projects as well as the intention of launching Phase 2 of the project.

Participants valued the transparency, open-mindedness and professionalism of participants. The constructive environment especially during discussions and working group sessions, flexible programme, workshop design, organization and facilitation were likewise recognized as having facilitated participants' learning and appreciation of the activity. Participants also found the exchange on project implementation issues and discussions on partnership, communication, research networks and local knowledge to be very rich. For some, their learning was hindered by short time allocated for project presentations and ventilation in the meeting room.

Among their suggestions include: (1) organize the next workshop outside of Montpellier, preferably in one of the project sites; (2) improve DURAS website and use it as a platform to facilitate discussion among project participants; (3) invite agriculture students and professors as observers; and (4) organize workshop on participatory research methodologies, among others.

Over-all, the workshop met the expectations of the participants with most of them feeling very satisfied.