

Partner Collaboration Survey 2010

Results on project partners' perceptions about collaboration in the ACIAR North West Vietnam Project

1a. What do you find positive or beneficial about working together with all the partner institutions?

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| <p>The benefits I gained from working with NOMAFSI are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences in doing experiments in the real context. • Experiences in working with farmers, from beginning to the end of experiments (x2). • Experiences in organising and collaborating in experiments with different partners. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to learn from each other and to solve problems more objectively and comprehensively (x4). • Each institution has its own strength so working together can bring more effective results (x2). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn from each other and experience sharing between partners (x3). • Each institution has its own strength thus working together would bring effectiveness and also would organize programs not only in the country but also abroad (human resource, equipments and capacity etc.) • All these institutions are agricultural so they can easily understand the project activities. |
| <p>Working together with the other institutions helps to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase knowledge about other disciplines, such as about value chain and fruit trees.(x3) • enhance team work capacity as well as capacity to work with people we haven't known before. • learn new approaches from each other when working with farmers. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOMAFSI Logistic support when CASRAD team is in the field • NOMAFSI Field guiding: locations, suggesting persons needed to be interviewed |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I learn method for designing and implementation of project. (x2) • I learn method for working with local partners, especially with farmers |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of partners are devoted and their staffs are active in all activities • Information exchanged is rich and diverse |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We can solve many problems at the same time |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain knowledge of cultivation on sloping land |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building relationships for future career |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain knowledge from institutions and universities (x2) • Enhance personal capacity (x2) • Access to new knowledge as well as new technology (x2) |

1b What do you find difficult or less positive about working together with all the partner institutions?

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| <p>Some difficulties about working with NOMAFSI in the project are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers are far away from each other and their work is mainly in the field while many things can't be easily shared by emails or phone calls, which make things sometimes don't go smoothly (x2). • Besides work in the project each institution has a lot of their own things to do thus collaboration in implementing an experiments sometimes is not effective. (x4) • When working together, one partner only designs experiments while the other only follows up. Therefore, the follow-up side meets difficulties when asking farmers to do some more emerging things. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project researchers don't always collaborate well in the project activities. The institutions only care about their work not about the others'. • Research activities of the institutions are sometimes overlapped. Besides, each partner has its own features and ways to do things (time period, fund, topic etc.) • Each institution has its own leader so staffs have to follow their leader. Thus, the project researchers are quite dependent while leaders are normally very busy, which lead to unplanned and ineffective activities. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different approaches and implementation due to different disciplines often lead to some difficulties. For example, I am very familiar with erosion problems or ICM on maize, fruit trees but I find it difficult collaborating with CASRAD in value chain activities. • Differences in the way of understanding farmers: People from Hanoi based institutions often think of the NW farmers differently from those who live in the NW which led to different ideas in research activities. For example, one difficulty of farmers is corn preservation, for Hanoi based people it is easy to solve by building stores, but in fact, for farmers, it's not about preservation only it's about their debt, seeds and inputs. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different background then they could not involve directly in field work |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willing for cooperation for overall goal of project |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's difficult to arrange time to implement activities due to different partners' schedules (x3) • Distance is also a challenge |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the project members haven't been trained about participatory approach (x2). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited information updated, normally through some workshops only (x2) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited participation of local officers due to low expense that is not enough for travel and following the project activities in their assigned sites • Local officer can't be initiative in the project activities |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It takes time in implementing activities |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DARDs' officers do not actively participate in the project activities |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration between the partners is not so good. For example, when a partner faced a problem which is not their discipline. But when another partner offered support, they denied. |

2a. What do you find positive or beneficial about combining different disciplines and topics in one project?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The system is comprehensively evaluated from which weak or less positive things are identified to find solutions for. • Researchers gain much experience and knowledge for their work (x3). • Opportunity for success of the project is higher. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When solving a problem we need to solve many elements relating to that problem. Thus, different disciplines and topics in one project can help solve problems more comprehensively (x3). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand exactly real needs of farmers in the two project sites. Bring into play institutions' strengths and from that effective disciplines can be identified as well as less effective disciplines should be improved. • Different disciplines are supplements for each other (x3) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn to see agricultural things in a system approach. For example, before I simply used techniques in agricultural activities but now I often explore whether those techniques would bring social and economic effects. • Comprehensive solutions being offered for the NW difficulties: techniques combining with consumption markets. • Relationships with the other institutions as well as with their staff were built and it is good opportunities for young staff in their career. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning how to get outputs from technical team and use them as inputs for marketing research |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We can find out suitable solutions |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We can see problems from many perspectives so we can find the best solutions (x4) • We can get good results if we have right people to be in charge of each specific activity (x2) • We can solve different problems toward the project overall economical objective. (x3) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences in managing and doing research in different disciplines • Staff from different institutions are often more self confident and try their best in work to ensure that they are not lower estimated than staff from the other institutions (x2). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts of research results are more persuasive when doing research on different disciplines (x2) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive understanding about the target audience (x2) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In principles, the project can make use of many disciplines to serve its objectives |

2b. What do you find difficult or less positive about combining different disciplines and topics in one project?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different disciplines have different ways of seeing problems thus sometimes it's difficult to reach an agreement. • The project focuses on several topics so it's difficult to solve a topic thoroughly (x2). • Collaborative activities between different disciplines are still not effective (x2). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to different topics assigned to different institutions there's things that understandable to those specific institutions only, not to the others. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservativeness: for example, how to approach farmers effectively in the experiment of natural resource management TBU and NOMAFSI station have different ideas in using <i>Arachis pinto</i> which NOMAFSI station staff used to use and were successful before. • Difference in evaluation: for example, in diagnostic research PPRI thought that mapping (lát cắt) was not important, thus they didn't do all necessary things like depth of soil, type of soil and soil quality etc. and the result was limited that challenged experiment implementers. |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking time to explain ideas • The way to make output of marketing team to technical team? • How to convince other groups to prioritise activities more potential based on marketing study |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributed human and financial resources |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disagreement in research or guidance of the project activities (x3) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each institution work on their own topic while information sharing is limited and that leads to less effective results (x2) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to understand all the project activities as it requires a large and deep knowledge (x2) • Difficulties in combining the project activities' results together • Expected outcomes from different institutions are different and it sometimes has bad affect on the project results |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak collaboration can lead to failure (x2) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to coordinate well all project activities • Not suitable to the current situation in Vietnam |

3a. What do you find positive or beneficial when working with local authorities?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to implement experiments • Easy to multiply and communicate experiment results (x2) • Easier working with farmers |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to implements all project activities |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Necessary information about the locations (customs, economic status, soil, climate etc.) provided by local officers (at province, district, commune and village levels) (x2) • Local authorities have power to make decision or guide and communicate to farmers directly through policies and priorities of the location. (x3) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local officers follow implementing processes and report to their bosses. • Local officers understand their locations so their voice is important to farmers, which helps experiments implemented smoothly. (x7) • Having collaboration from district and commune officers is an advantage if the project has phase 2. Additionally, local officers can learn new technology that helps much in agricultural development. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good communication to understand general situation of the communities (x2) • Good guiding where to go for the best information gathering |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We can exploit power of local authorities for project |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If extension officers actively participate in the project our results could be better as they are trusted by farmers. (x3) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good relationships with local authorities help the project staff work more conveniently in the sites (x6) • Support from local authorities also help get entry permission for foreign experts easier (x2) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities' participation in the project activities can ensure the stability of the project (x2) • Quick and exact feedback from local officers help the project make adjustments on time |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project results can be better communicated • Indigenous knowledge is necessary to better the project results |

3b. What do you find difficult or less positive when working with local authorities?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bad working habits of some local officers• Sometimes local authorities ask for too high financial support• Local officers often lead opinions when we need to get farmers' feedback. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Due to complication in working system of all level authorities lower levels sometimes don't implement activities as agreed unless the higher agree or guide (though that activities were agreed by all levels before).• All local officers are also staff of their local institutions so their time and other activities are independent (x2).• Local officers have their own work in their institutions which relates to their stable life thus they are not really devoted to activities of other institutions. (x5) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I find it difficult when local officers didn't get permission from their bosses to participate in the project, like the case in Lai Chau.• Changes in local officers like in Mai Son did make less effective participation of local officers in the project. (x2) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If leaders are not ready to cooperate with us, we can get some difficulties of administrative procedures, participatory of local partners |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Budget for local officers hasn't come to those who work in the project activities directly and that's why many of them are not actively participate in.• Many local departments still don't see the sustainable development role of the project in their locations so they don't really support. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The most disadvantage of remote officers is that they are subsidized by the government so they are expectant, independent and don't active in the project activities. Thus, things normally finish when project finish.• Initially it's very difficult to approach remote officers due to their specific characteristics (x2) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The project hasn't worked well with the local authorities yet. Role, responsibility and commitment are not clear |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Traditional habits and customs are always challenges for the project staff |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complicated administrative procedures (x2)• Unclear commitment of the local authorities |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited capacity of local officers (x3) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some local officers only think for their private benefits.• Some activities of the project like taking soil sample, designing erosion experiments, value chain etc. are still far from local officers' knowledge so they are not interesting in participating in |

4a. What do you find positive or beneficial about involving farmers in the research?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement experiments easier and more conveniently.• Farmers can understand more clearly the objectives of the project• Increase farmers' self-confidence in information sharing. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It's helpful when farmers participate in all activities and evaluate project results.• Increase farmers' capacity• Communication of the project results would be more effective when farmers talk to farmers (x4). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Farmers share their real needs as well as their difficulties and advantages. (x4) |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to implement feasible technology. • Researchers and farmers have chance to understand each other and find a common voice. • Enhance farmers' role, their awareness and their decision making capacity in solving their problems. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willing to spend time with researchers when being interviewed |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They will contribute for sustainability of project (x2) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers' indigenous knowledge is useful and necessary (x2) • Farmers are those who participate directly in farming activities so they are the most suitable to monitor and evaluate the project results best (x2). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If farmers understand the project they will participate very actively and thus results can be much better (x2) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers' participation helps design experiment better and more realistic • Farmers can show limitations of the experiments so that the project can make right adjustments (x2) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers understand their areas very well, including soil characteristics, climate, etc. (x2) • Farmers are experienced with their farming activities on their lands |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When farmers voluntarily participate in the project activities the results will be stable and remain with farmers even after the project finishes • I learnt a lot of how to get farmers involved and work with them and I hope to apply this participatory approach in my other projects |

4b. What do you find difficult or less positive about involving farmers in the research?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers often ask for much support (x2) • Farmers are expectant (x3) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes research results are not as expected which decrease farmers' trust. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers still don't imagine exactly of what they are doing with the project and what benefits they can get from the activities. • They don't really care about research activities due to their habits and customs. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers are conservative and difficult to accept new things. (x2) • Farmers are not satisfied with new techniques or researchers have ideas that make farmers panic and don't believe in new techniques. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited capacity in accepting innovation • Many farmers think experiment areas are belong to the project and they don't spend attention to them. • Farmers don't want to invest in intensive cultivation and they don't have budget to buy fertilizer and inputs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maybe farmers are still not aware of their important role in the project so they are still expectant, not actively participate in activities |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak commitment with the project activities (x3) • Language barrier (x3) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers are shy to speak in public (x2) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited education (x3) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers are not detailed while experiments require details and patience |

5. Please name three things that you have learned in this project.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences working with farmers in experiments • How to organize, implement and finish an experiment with farmers • Working experiences from partners. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seriousness in research • Comprehension in research activities |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have gained skills of working effectively and actively from both national and foreign experts. • The diversity of research activities and combination of results. • When working with farmers we need to be patient, detailed and active. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team work capacity (x2). • Experiment evaluation. • Information sharing |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to work in a Collaboration way • How to make our priorities become other teams priorities • Leadership |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Method of project management • Participatory of local partners • Carrying out of experiment in large scale |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods of collect and share information through workshops and meetings with farmers (x6) • Sustainable cultivation techniques on sloping land (soil and water protection, increase income) • Changes in M&E planning are very new and feasible |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory method helps identify needs and opportunities in agricultural development in the North West, from which can find solutions to improve market engagement • Learn some new things from NOMAFSI and CASRAD • Serious and effective methods and skills of working of the Australian experts (x4) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-disciplinary research • Sustainable cultivation on sloping land |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain methods to engage to markets through value chain activities |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I gain practical experience and that helps me a lot in lecturing in TBU |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how to evaluate activities effectively (x2) |

6. Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the work and collaboration of the NW Vietnam project?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each partner should be assigned a specific research topic and specific location. • The project coordinator should send out action plan of the following year early for all partners can easily arrange their work (x2). • The project evaluation should be done by an independent party. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The institutions need to work and collaborate more closely. • Research topic of each institution needs to have comments from the other institutions. • Result reporting and reflecting activities need to be more. • Enhance researchers' capacity. |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment and committed responsibility are needed to each member of the project. All leaders also need to be more responsible for their staff and to encourage them to work. • Changes in personnel also make things more difficult to implement. Newcomers normally don't understand and don't know what has been done and what to be done next. (x2) • Evaluation of each project member is needed to know who have work well and who have not and then talk to their leaders to make adjustment. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More active information sharing from all partners. For examples, when PPRI does temperate fruit experiments on eroded soil they should talk to erosion management team to work together. • Let farmers evaluate by themselves which techniques are best to apply because beneficiaries are farmers, not researchers. • Focus on feasible experiments. For example, in Na Ot, with such weather and steep, we shouldn't continue mini-terrace experiments. We should do mulch instead. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More involved in technical work : field visits at the milestones time • Technical team could involve in survey with farmers • Exchanging outputs of partners (reports, pictures, planning, monitoring outputs...) (x2) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honestly (Trustfully) with results of project • Cooperation effectively for overall goal of project |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redistribute budget every year to ensure that the distributed budget is suitable to each acting partner. • Each partner need to have its own and independent report to ensure objectivity and honesty |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project coordinator needs to work more closely and effectively with all partners • The project needs to have deeper involvement of local departments like extension and plan protection. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All partners need to work more closely through regular information updates, for example every two months (x3) • There need to be more meetings so that all partners know and understand the others' activities as well as their plans |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When experiments are fix no single partner can change them as it causes difficulties for field researchers • Roles and responsibilities of each project staff need to be clearer so that field researchers can address when they meet problems |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance local officers' capacity (x2) • Experiments should be suitable to each specific location • Multiple successful results by training workshops for farmers • Salary for local officers should be feasible and consistent between the institutions (for example, between PPRI and NOMAFSI) (x2) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field staff need to be more active and spend more time on the project activities • Discuss with local authorities and relevant people to ensure they understand the project's objectives • Better connection between all partners in term of information sharing and activities implementation |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be regularly informed and updated of plans and results of the project activities |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce numbers of workshops as well as workshop days |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project needs to have a qualified Vietnamese project coordinator who is good at sharing information, processing reports from the components, facilitating, planning and connecting activities. |