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Abstract

The Role of Leadership and Local Ownership in Research 4 Development (R4D) Projects †

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† Presented at the Third International Tropical Agriculture Conference (TROPAG 2019), Brisbane, Australia, 11–13 November 2019.

Published: 24 December 2019

Abstract: All researchers for development struggle to achieve lasting results on the ground. Regardless of the introduced technology, the fundamental basis for achieving lasting results involves: 1) strategic project leadership, 2) local ownership of research objectives, research design, outputs and overall results, and 3) local leadership and management of activities and finances. To support lasting results, research tools can assist in communicating the complexities of an introduced technology and can guide stakeholder interactions to bridge knowledge systems and create common understandings and new hybrid knowledge systems. We highlight a transdisciplinary process used to co-create a Research Discussion Tool and identification of 9 thematic areas which, in combination, enabled obstacles to technology uptake to be overcome and farmers to benefit from research-based innovations. The process involved assisting local researchers and extension agents to co-develop solutions, strategies and methods to improve technology uptake by farmers in Lao PDR, using a series of change management interventions. A complex ecology of factors involving farmers' decision drivers and farmers' decision enablers within farmers' production systems influence technology uptake. The relative importance of each factor is dependent on the specific technology that is being introduced. Hence, projects that introduce new technologies grapple to address all relevant factors and often do not have the ability to deal with the complex array of factors that are at play. Co-constructed knowledge embeds local knowledge that becomes accessible to projects. The approach also has the potential to harness collaborative exchanges with other projects in similar geographical regions.

Keywords: research 4 development; technology uptake; leadership; agricultural innovation; transdisciplinary research

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Funding: This work was supported by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) [Project no. ASEM/2014/052: 'Smallholder farmer decision-making and technology adoption in southern Lao PDR: opportunities and constraints'].

Acknowledgments: We are grateful to ACIAR for their support. We would also like to thank staff based in our Lao partner institutions for their support and assistance, namely, colleagues at the National University of Laos, the National Agriculture and Forestry Institute and the Department of Technical Extension and Agro-Processing. Fieldwork conducted for the study was approved by James Cook University's Human Ethics Research Committee: Approval H6109.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.