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Capacity Building Applied to a Livestock Research Network in West Africa to Enhance the Development Process

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Abstract

The analysis of the development process in the agricultural sector of developing countries has often identified the limited capacity and/or lack of competent technical, scientific and extension personnel, isolation from sources of scientific information and limited opportunities for collaborative research as key constraints to the effective generation and dissemination of research outputs in form of improved and novel techniques and innovations for the benefit of the agriculture and livestock producer.

The International Trypanotolerance Centre (ITC) is a sub-regional Livestock Research Centre based in The Gambia, supporting applied Research and Development (R&D) in low-input and market-oriented livestock production systems in six countries in West Africa (The Gambia, Senegal, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone and Liberia). The Centre has given, since its inception in 1984, strong emphasis to capacity building of technical, scientific and extension personnel in the NARS (National Agricultural Research Systems) and national Livestock Departments.

In the framework of the Centre's regional activities, particularly those supported by the EU-funded R&D programme PROCORDEL (Programme Concerté recherche-développement sur l'élevage en Afrique de l'Ouest), a concept has been adopted to overcome the constraints mentioned above. This concept links classical elements of Human Resource Development (HRD) in such a way that short-, medium- and long-term objectives in support of increased R&D efficiency are considered at the same time and in a regional context.

The main HRD elements are: training needs assessment of partners in research, training courses targeted at different levels of expertise and national qualification differences, regional mobility within the network, development of training materials with partners of the network, assessment of training impact, promotion of modern information and data management technologies.

The objectives are: immediate support to ongoing research activities through technical training of personnel involved in those activities (short-term); application of the Train the Trainer concept for research/extension personnel who in turn will be enabled to train farmers for the transfer and adoption of improved technological animal health and production packages (medium-term); career development through post-graduate training (long-term).

Keywords: Capacity building, HRD, research networks, training needs assessment, West Africa