



# PAEPARD



 PAEPARD communication:  
The **journey** from an **information** platform  
to a **knowledge** management system

Invest in **your** innovation platforms!

Invest in **your** capacities!

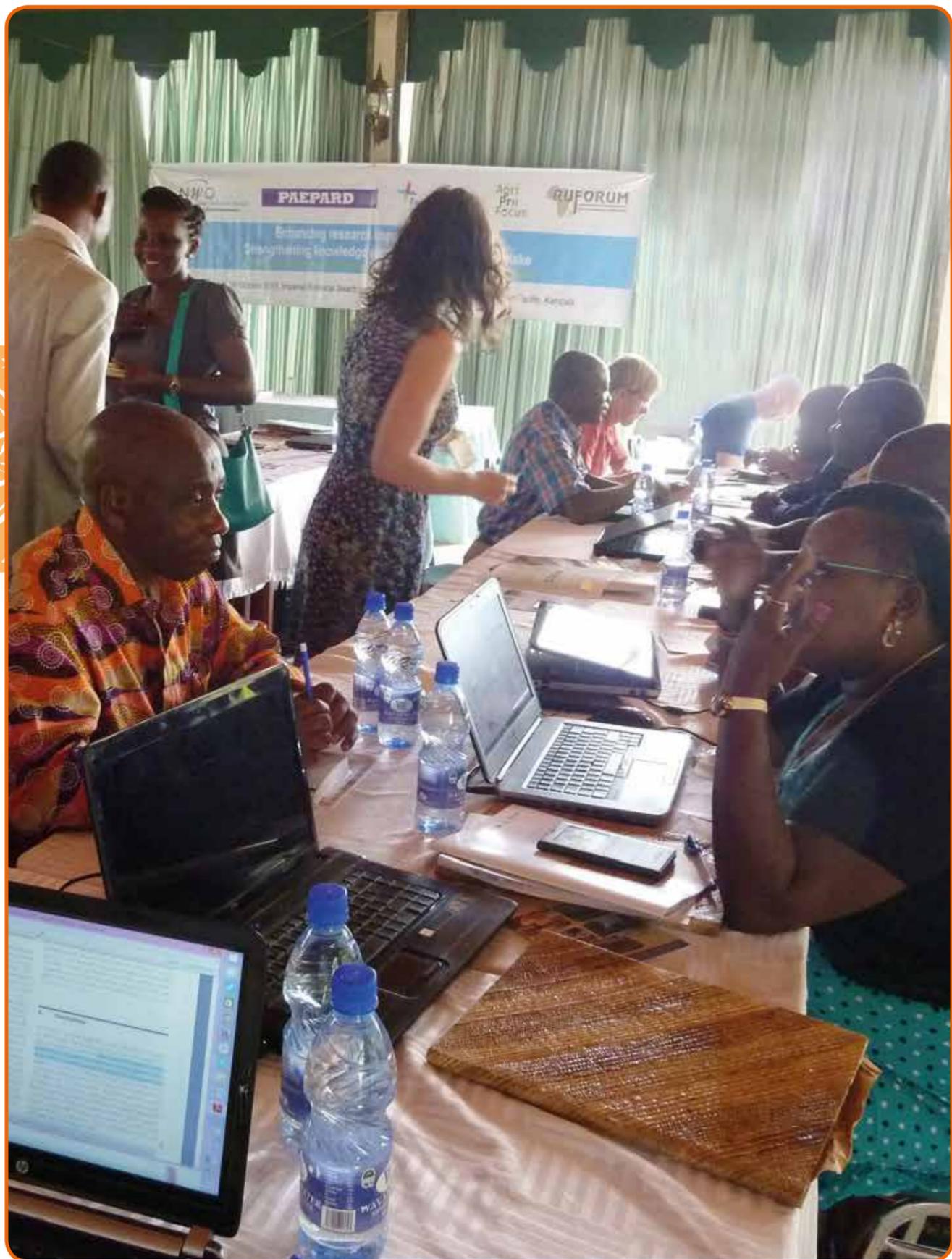
**YOU**

**building partnerships**

**US**

Invest in **your** policies!

Invest in **your** fundings!



## Introduction: managing communication is not easy!

The Platform for African-European Partnership in Agricultural Research for Development (PAEPARD) initiative aims to foster strong multi-stakeholder partnerships in agricultural research and development (ARD) to contribute to achieving the sustainable development goals (SDG). PAEPARD seeks to achieve this by:

- **Facilitating** partnerships between farmer organizations, civil society groups, research institutes and education institutes, private companies and policy networks;
- **Supporting** partnerships through capacity strengthening and access to information on funding opportunities;
- **Assisting** partners to prepare strong research proposals which will address real needs at the farm or enterprise level;
- **Advocating** for increased support for demand-led, multi-stakeholder partnerships in ARD

The PAEPARD communication and advocacy strategy aims to support and strengthen African-European multi-stakeholder ARD partnerships by demonstrating the value of a demand-led approach involving a wide range of actors. The strategy has two strategic objectives:

- To create strong synergy and commitment among PAEPARD partners through timely and effective communication. This includes formal communication with and feedback from the European Commission (EC), as well as communication between partners and between work streams.
- To raise awareness of the benefits of African-European multi-stakeholder ARD partnerships and encourage active engagement of ARD stakeholders in such partnerships. In order to achieve this, the Platform:

- **Creates** awareness about PAEPARD activities among different actors;
- **Disseminates** outputs and outcomes of project

activities and learns from the experiences of others;

- **Shares** information about funding opportunities and promotes networking;
- **Attracts** investments and manages competitive research funds to build multi-stakeholder partnerships in ARD.

As the PAEPARD project is complex and multi-faceted, ensuring that appropriate information is made available to users in a timely manner and in a form that can be easily understood and used has been a major challenge.

At the start of PAEPARD implementation, communication and advocacy messages were quite generalized in support of demand-led, multi-stakeholder ARD for impact. Initially, it was hoped that case studies would deliver strong examples to demonstrate the impact of multi-stakeholder consortia on agricultural development. At that time, the PAEPARD partners did not come forward with case studies that had convincing evidence about this approach. However, as evidence from the project's experience and the consortia supported by PAEPARD emerged, the messages have become more nuanced and convincing.

To further enhance efficiency and ensure a more coordinated approach, PAEPARD communication and advocacy activities were combined in one of four working groups, unlike in the initial strategy in which the two areas had been placed in separate working groups. The other working groups under which PAEPARD activities are organized include partnerships, capacity development, and coordination and management.

PAEPARD information and communication systems have also evolved over time, influenced by changes in project orientation and by feedback from information users. This led to a shift in emphasis and the emergence of new information and communication needs and, consequently, in the project strategy and tools designed and implemented to meet these needs.

The PAEPARD information platform went through several stages before moving towards



an effective knowledge management system. In the early phase of the project, communication tools were only used for disseminating information through Dgroup, the PAEPARD blog, and PAEPARD and consortium member websites. Supported by a common communication and advocacy strategy to support the evolving communication needs of PAEPARD, members led to the development of a bespoke tool named OSIRIS (Online System Improving Relationships by Information Sharing), which transformed the information platform to a genuine information system.

Finally, by publishing synthesis documents, such as policy briefs, offering the platform partners free websites and Web 2.0 tools for sharing experiences, and starting to use social media (Twitter and Facebook) as new communication channels, the PAEPARD information platform transformed into a knowledge management system. This paper describes how PAEPARD has sought to meet the platform users' information needs and shares some lessons that may be of interest to those designing similar knowledge management platforms for other multi-stakeholder initiatives.

the project; communication was essentially internal (i.e. sharing information within the project team), and external communication was limited to project promotion.

and communication were managed by the project team through one-way information tools like fora and blogs (see box 1). The PAEPARD Dgroup and the PAEPARD blog were the first constituents of the communication platform.

**1** Definition of the first communication web tools used by PAEPARD

**> Dgroup**  
 A 'Dgroup' is an online facility which supports interaction and discussion between members of an interest group or project, which is used by more than 700 active communities, with over 150,000 registered users. It is particularly suitable for users with low bandwidth networks and most exchanges are through email, using electronic mailing lists. A PAEPARD Dgroup community (<https://dgroups.org/paepard>) was launched in February 2010 to support internal communication among PAEPARD project partners and provide up-to-date information about ARD funding opportunities and events. Today, it continues to be used to exchange information on a range of topics including forthcoming project meetings, useful resources, and new calls for proposals. The Dgroup also provides a means through which partners can readily access project documents and resource materials. The PAEPARD Dgroup community counted in August 2017 over 8,000 members, who receive and disseminate ARD information. Over the years, the PAEPARD Dgroup has become one of the most influential networks for creating complementarities and synergies among the many actors involved in agriculture in Africa. PAEPARD Dgroup is now used regularly by FAO, CGIAR, etc. to post their conference and reports announcements. The 'Reports and Resources on ARD' section of the PAEPARD Dgroup library contains some 330 titles, although a weakness of this section is that there is no search engine and documents can only be found in chronological or thematic order.

**> Blogging**  
 A blog is a webpage where an individual or organization shares opinions, experiences and activities, which is usually updated on a regular basis. A PAEPARD 'blog' was set up (<http://paepard.blogspot.com>) which was designed to:

- provide up-to-date information on other ARD funding opportunities and events including advertising call for proposals;
- support the process of partnership development and document and share how this was done;
- create complementarities with other initiatives by sharing good ARD practices and promote the ARD approach.

The PAEPARD blog has produced, on average, 350 postings each year, and has proved to be particularly successful reaching large numbers of viewers and attracting very positive feedback. In 2016, the blog received 219,985 page views throughout the year, with an average of around 600 page views per day. There is no doubt that the 118 aflatoxin tagged blog posts, published since 2010, have influenced donors and research actors, as well as set up funding opportunities and balanced African-European partnerships. Extensive use has also been made of video as a communication medium on the PAEPARD blog, particularly for short interviews with persons involved in different aspects of ARD.

**> Slide share**  
 SlideShare is a Web 2.0-based slide hosting service. Users can upload files privately or publicly in the following formats: PowerPoint, PDF, Keynote or OpenDocument presentations. This service was used extensively by PAEPARD users, not only for project presentations but also to give visibility to third parties. Some 230 presentations have been shared over the last three years and the five most viewed presentations have received more than 7,000 visits.

**> YouTube**  
 A number of video interviews with PAEPARD partners were used as 'teasers' to give more visibility to consortia supported by PAEPARD or third parties. Video was also used as a communication medium on the PAEPARD blog, particularly for short interviews with persons involved in different aspects of ARD. Twenty-five video interviews were produced and uploaded by PAEPARD. In addition, a high number of PAEPARD blog posts have embedded videos from conferences, partner organizations, innovative technologies and witnesses.



## How the information and communication platform evolved

At the start of the PAEPARD implementation phase (2010), a draft communication strategy was developed based on stakeholder discussions held during the inception phase. At the core of the strategy was an information and communication platform that would meet the needs of researchers, farmer organizations, civil society, the private sector, development partners and others. The platform main functions were to:

- **provide** up-to-date information about ARD funding opportunities and events;
- **support** the process of partnership development and document and share how this was done;
- **assist** organizations to build joint African-European research proposals;

- **share** good ARD practices and promote the multi-stakeholder partnership approach.

During the development of the draft communication strategy, an analysis was made of three widely used ARD information systems at that time: InfosysPlus, Wisard and Interdev to determine whether any of these would meet PAEPARD objectives. However, the analysis revealed that these platforms (which are no longer available) did not include tools dedicated to creating multi-stakeholder consortia and collaborative work; such tools are especially useful when partner institutions are located at some distance from each other, making frequent face-to-face meetings impractical. Consequently, one of PAEPARD priorities was to design a bespoke communication platform that would meet its needs and incorporate interactive tools to facilitate the partnership development process, in which regional farmers' organizations and the agribusiness sector would take a more prominent role.

Initially, the PAEPARD community was limited to members from institutions participating in



Some PAEPARD information was also published online using SlideShare and Youtube tools.

However, throughout the different phases of PAEPARD, effective communication internally and externally was challenged by:

- A wide range of project partners with different interests, expectations, capacities, operational procedures and institutional cultures, which means that the type of information and the preferred means by which it is communicated often vary among different actors.
- Multiple target audiences with varying expectations and demands for information; different stakeholders often have to be reached in different ways and the communication and/or advocacy messages need to be tailored appropriately.
- Communication processes are not linear and mapping information flows between users of the platform and coordinators is a vital but complex task, especially when co-learning is encouraged and partners engage in a process

of mutual learning, recognizing that each has something special to offer.

- Language barriers: English or French are not generally the native communication language of most partners, although they are the two official languages used by PAEPARD, and in ARD in general.

To cope with those constraints a website dedicated to the brokerage PAEPARD activities has been shaped with the objectives to show the on-going progress of the project, to provide general information on ARD to the visitors, and to enable multi-stakeholder contacts for potential partnerships (see box 2).

As a result of the PAEPARD mid-term review in 2012, it was recognized that internal and external communication needed to be improved and divided into two complementary but distinct activities, and that the tools needed for each purpose were not the same.

PAEPARD communication functions remained the same but only the first one – to provide ARD information – was achieved. To address the three other functions (see above), new ways and means had to be found. To this end, PAEPARD revised communication and advocacy strategy (2015) defined two new strategic objectives. The first objective was to strengthen synergy and commitment among core partners through timely and effective communication. This included mandatory formal communication with the EC, which is a contractual obligation, and improved communication between partners and working groups to promote more effective networking.

The information to be communicated was differentiated as follows:

- disseminating outputs and outcomes of project activities and learning from the experiences of others; and,
- sharing information about funding opportunities and promoting networking; and, attracting investments to build on multi-stakeholder partnerships in ARD.

Addressing the challenges and constraints related to improving internal and external communication was achieved through a process of learning and negotiation so that:

- a) internal mandatory obligations were strengthened and made more visible in the revised communication and advocacy strategy including follow up progress (financial reports, work plans) on activities;

MANDATORY	DESIRABLE
<p><b>To be delivered</b> on a regular basis to the EC, internal contractual information (follow up progress on activities: financial reports, work plans) devoted to management.</p>	<p><b>To inform</b> and update PAEPARD stakeholders (working groups (WG) other partners such as consortia, User-Led Process<sup>1</sup>) on WG activities.</p>
<p><b>To provide</b> basic information (to follow-up with PAEPARD stakeholders) in order to meet the goals of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting the process of partnership development and document and share how this was done;</li> <li>• Assist organizations to build joint African-European research proposals.</li> </ul>	<p><b>To facilitate</b> interactions amongst partners in order to meet the goals of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assisting organizations to build joint African-European research proposals;</li> <li>• Sharing good ARD practices and promoting the ARD approach.</li> </ul>

The second strategic objective built on the aims of the initial communication strategy to raise awareness of the benefits of African-European multi-stakeholder ARD partnerships and encourage active engagement of ARD stakeholders by:

- building the capacity of external actors;
- creating awareness about PAEPARD activities among different actors;

b) stronger management action was also taken to encourage compliance of internal obligations (reporting, documenting) including regular management meetings (more than twice a year as previously) using video conferencing to monitor progress of the working groups (WG), including changing the way of working with the WG and consortia;

c) a publications task force was established to improve external communications;

<sup>1</sup> See previous publications of PAEPARD (2016): Policy Brief N°2 Facilitating innovation in agricultural research for development: Brokerage as the vital link; and Policy Brief N°3 Inclusive, balanced, demand-led partnerships for ARD: A consultative process.

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## Characteristics of a website in an information and communication platform

### > Website

The PAEPARD website is available in English and French to present the project's objectives, the structure of the group activities (working groups) and partners involved, and to facilitate communication between PAEPARD partners and consortia. The website also met the PAEPARD goal of providing up-to-date information about ARD funding opportunities and events, enhancing its brokerage function between various stakeholders for setting up partnerships.

The site was created with the easy-to-use open source YesWiki (see <https://yeswiki.net/>) without the need for technical training. The PAEPARD website provides links to partner websites which have their own project pages.

In the first version of the PAEPARD website, which was intended to be only used by PAEPARD members, the site was fed directly by PAEPARD members and consortia leaders. This represented a human resource cost, which was split among project and consortia members. However, in the absence of strong management guidelines and communication actions not being included in annual action plans, this approach was not very successful; this communication task was perceived as additional work and few PAEPARD members published any activities related to the project to populate the website.

However, the latest version of the PAEPARD website launched in early 2016 automatically aggregates information from PAEPARD consortia and working groups in their personal work space (see later). Thus, the information is entered only once and is then automatically published on PAEPARD website if made public by the owners (consortia members). The website supports partnership development by providing search functions for partners and funding opportunities. Information on project activities and events are also clearly highlighted and a set of resources, including project publications, can be downloaded in PDF format.

In July 2017, the average number of visits per month to the website was about 4,000.

 **The PAEPARD platform had to evolve to allow our partners and consortia to become major players in information and communication. The platform then needed to integrate more decentralized tools to allow them to produce structured and up-to-date information. This need marked a new phase in the platform's journey towards becoming a knowledge management system.**

d) internet-based tools were developed through a participatory and iterative process (see later) to meet PAEPARD members' needs.

However, the mid-term review signalled the need for change and made specific recommendations that were acted upon by PAEPARD: the main changes were to move from a project team managed information platform to a communication platform that is driven largely by project partners and consortia members.

## Evolving communication needs

During the early stages of PAEPARD implementation, two calls for proposals (in 2010 and 2011) were launched, which attracted approximately 150 multi-stakeholder partnership applications. A total of 19 consortia were selected for support, including facilitation in partnership building. However, it soon became apparent that the overall process did not give adequate support to research users, especially farmer organizations. To address it, a new mechanism was developed: the User-Led Process (ULP).

### A new approach bringing new information and communication demands

In the first stage of the ULP, a regional farmer organization consults with stakeholders to identify a priority theme for which research activities are needed to solve problems or respond to emerging opportunities. The issues are then studied in more detail by specialists, collated and made available to stakeholders in two workshops facilitated by agricultural innovation facilitators (AIF). By the end of the second workshop, a set of research questions are agreed and a small team of stakeholders mandated to develop a proposal.

As a result of this change in PAEPARD orientation, new information needs arose among PAEPARD-supported organizations. The partners in the existing 19 consortia also continued to need communication support. Consequently, new information and communication tools were tested to take account of these diverse needs.



### Communication tools to address capacity strengthening needs

The first necessity was to provide communication tools to the AIF to assist them in facilitating the inception workshops. A participative workshop on communication organized in Montpellier, February 2012, brought together the individuals in charge of communication in each consortium (8 in total). A variety of Web 2.0 open source and free tools were presented. At the end of the workshop, participants selected the group of tools that seemed most appropriate to their needs: e.g. tools for surveys, brain storming, meeting facilitation, mind mapping etc.).

Several months after the Web 2.0 tool training, however, consortia were still not using them as communication officers did not have time to practise and deepen their knowledge, and even less to train other consortium members. Another reason for the failure lies in the wide array of tools; the use of a different tool for different needs discouraged many of the workshop participants.

### Decentralized communication tools for ULP

The second necessity was to provide members of each consortium with tools to write research project proposals. At a follow-up communication workshop (Yaoundé, January 2013), the AIF could be trained in a range of existing Web 2.0 open source and free communication tools. They had to select the most relevant tools to allow members of a consortium to work together and produce a research proposal. They chose to use a Wiki to facilitate external communication by using it to design the websites of the PGU. For internal communication, they chose to share documents via Dropbox and use discussion fora to facilitate discussion on various topics (see box 3).

Example of tweet used to highlight PAEPARD Trichoderma consortium progress on a social network.

## 3 A website under users' leadership

### > ULP websites

The tool offered to the ULPs consisted of a private collaborative work space and a public website. The ULP members could exchange and produce information through two tools: a discussion forum and a document sharing facility via DropBox. ULP members then had the opportunity to publish their information on a website; to do that they could use a customized Wiki to create web pages without using the html language. ULP websites employed the easy-to-use open source YesWiki (see <https://yeswiki.net/>)

Results from using the Wiki were mixed: some ULPs used the site to promote their activities or to upload strategic documents but external communication remained confused and disorderly and there was no consistent communication strategy for information sharing. This can be explained by the fact that there was no definite editorial line (total freedom was given to each ULP) and, above all, that the information published on the website was not structured (pages of very different texts from one ULP to the other) and, finally, that the trained ULP facilitators were no longer in charge of facilitating the ULP.

## Towards a new bespoke communication tool

As previous attempts to introduce available communication tools to the platform had failed, PAEPARD decided to fully involve consortia and working group members in the design of a customized collaborative tool especially designed to support people working together and producing and sharing documents (joint proposals). This was an important step in becoming an information and communication system.

### OSIRIS

To better understand the needs of a team working together for a common goal (working group, consortia or ULP) and how it communicated, it was decided to observe a working group *in situ*. This was undertaken in Kenya in February, 2014, in order to study the information exchanged and for what purpose, as well as to design a tool that would facilitate the group's work.

The first prototype of an integrated platform was presented to ULP and consortia representatives and to PAEPARD members. The device is named OSIRIS for *Online System to Improve Relationships by Information Sharing*.

Each ULP, consortia and PAEPARD work stream has its own OSIRIS space. Whilst the spaces are initially private, each group can share some or

all of its information with other groups. Further communication training on OSIRIS was provided in Ghana in September 2015 to representatives of 15 consortia and ULPs. Participants are now qualified to train other members of their ULP consortium on the use of OSIRIS and a manual and videos in English and French were published as support media (see box 4).

During the development of OSIRIS, a revised PAEPARD communication and advocacy strategy was also defined and developed (see also later for more detail). As a result, consortia and ULP were able to share contractual information (deliverables, reports) with the project coordinator, share certain information with other consortia or work streams (calendar, news,

## 4 OSIRIS

OSIRIS is a bilingual (English and French) collaborative working platform customized from the existing Wiki used for other tools to allow, among other functions: managing a directory, a library, calendar, news, online shared documents and activities. The platform is also endowed with specific functions such as sharing of information with other systems, making appointments (Doodle), co-writing documents (Google Drive), etc. OSIRIS gathers a complete information system on consortia activities, shared work features, and web publishing function. OSIRIS is a free and open source system designed by PAEPARD.



documents), as well as news and certain documents with the PAEPARD website.

The launch of a new version was always accompanied by a workshop to provide training on the use of the tool, but also a place of reflection on the new communication needs and developments to shape the new version.

The added value of OSIRIS was seen not only in dissemination of the same information via different tools but also in the improvement in internal and external communications within the consortia.

Today, 15 consortiums use OSIRIS mainly as a tool for collaborative work among the consortium members and four of them use it as a promotional tool for their consortium on the web

## A major step towards knowledge management systems

OSIRIS enabled the PAEPARD information and communication platform to develop a true information system where data is structured and linked together. It was by adding value to the information (synthesizing, analyzing, transforming etc) that the PAEPARD platform could gradually become a knowledge management system. Producing information for social networks was a first step.

A social media campaign was launched for the European Development Days (EDD17) and specific objectives were defined in a PAEPARD social media communication strategy document. The PAEPARD communication team focused on Twitter and tweets were synchronized with a PAEPARD Facebook account.

The social media strategy includes, among others, identification of a set of themes related to the activity of PAEPARD and its consortia. Each of the themes is associated with a set of tweets that refer to electronic resources (web pages, documents) of the platform. Each tweet adheres to a precise graphic chart and contains a visual that illustrates the message carried by the tweet.

The social media campaign, with 95 tweets, 37,000 impressions and 1,200 profile visits on Twitter profile, has helped to increase PAEPARD visibility. PAEPARD has gained in exposure and institutional status and is linked to similar social

 **With the increased online visibility of PAEPARD publications, such as policy briefs and papers, and the dissemination of thematic and synthesis information via social media, PAEPARD information and communication platform is evolving towards a genuine knowledge management system.**

media partners; visits to the PAEPARD website increased by 25% during the EDD17.

The various tweets generated have helped to spread PAEPARD progress to a larger audience. This campaign was PAEPARD first social media campaign and therefore an opportunity to design and set up a new communication approach to highlight any PAEPARD events/activity on social media.

The campaign also created a dynamic to improve the PAEPARD website content as the information collected for the EDD17 was used to complete 10 consortia web pages, which were updated with progress, news, success stories and photos. In addition, external information sources linked with consortia activities and results were found and added to the PAEPARD website (consortia presentations, consortia articles on other websites). This approach will be repeated for the next event to support both web content and social media activity.

PAEPARD should continue to use social media to promote Africa-Europe multi-stakeholders partnerships in ARD, the importance of users' engagement, and the impact on the ground of these partnerships

## Integrating communication and advocacy

PAEPARD communication strategy has had to integrate the various changes of direction as the project evolved, based on continual reflection on achievements and challenges. Such a strategy has directly influenced the changes in the

*Osiris tool (Online System to Improve Relationships by Information Sharing), home page of consortia workspaces.*



communication and information platform.

A strong communication strategy is essential to identify audiences, as well as tailored messages that need to be conveyed. For PAEPARD, advocacy is an important part of its mandate, so having a combined communication and advocacy strategy with activities under one working group was a key development in the communication process, particularly to strengthen the goals of assisting organizations to build joint African-European research proposals and to share good ARD practices and promote the ARD approach.

The new communication and advocacy strategy for PAEPARD current phase (December 2013 to December 2017) developed at the communication workshop in Brussels, in October 2014, was validated through an online consultation allowing partners who were unable to participate in the workshop to provide input. Whilst this process took several months to complete, time was provided for partners to seriously reflect on what was required to enhance the effectiveness of PAEPARD communication and advocacy approaches. For example, the different stakeholders and their communication and advocacy interests were analysed in considerably more detail than previously, which

allowed a more targeted and realistic action plan to be drawn up for communication and advocacy activities. Furthermore, action plans are now prepared annually in which organizations and events are prioritized, responsibilities assigned and budgets allocated for implementation.

Initially, the project document stated the aim of advocacy activities was primarily to influence funding bodies in Europe to provide more support for demand-led multi-stakeholder African-European ARD partnerships. However, there was already a move towards targeting funding bodies in Africa and partners recommended that more attention should be paid to influencing national funding bodies on the continent. This view was reinforced by the mid-term review, which also recommended that in any future phase of the project, advocacy activities should have a stronger focus on engaging non-research stakeholders and more development-oriented funding sources.

As part of the PAEPARD advocacy strategy for promoting the multi-stakeholder partnership approach in ARD and the scaling up of ULPs, PAEPARD contributed to the EU-Africa High Level Policy Dialogue (HLPD) on Science, Technology and Innovation and shared its applied views with policy driven organizations such as CAAST-Net Plus, ERAfrica, ProIntensAfrica, and RINEA, all funded by the European Commission Directorate General for Research (DG-R&I). PAEPARD participated individually or collectively in key international events organized in Africa or in Europe:

- The ARCH (Agricultural Research for Global Challenges) pre-event meeting held in Brussels, 26-27 January 2016, prior to the DG-Agriculture conference presenting and discussing its new strategic approach to research and innovation, where PAEPARD exemplified the brokerage role of a multi-stakeholder partnership platform in ARD;

 **The combined communication and advocacy strategy has enabled PAEPARD communication and information platform to acquire new information resources. Above all, it enabled this platform to penetrate into the world of knowledge management systems thanks to the arrival of PAEPARD publications.**

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## PAEPARD published documents<sup>1</sup>

- > **Policy brief n°1:** the role of multi-stakeholder partnerships between Africa and Europe exemplified by the issue of aflatoxin contamination of food and feed (Oct 2015).
- > **Policy brief n°2:** Facilitating innovation in agricultural research for development: Brokerage as the vital link (Mar 2016).
- > **Policy brief n°3:** Inclusive, balanced, demand-led partnerships for ARD: A consultative process (Nov 2016).
- > **PAEPARD paper:** Facilitating innovation in agricultural research for development: Brokerage as the vital link (Nov 2016).
- > **PAEPARD paper:** Findings from the sector and multi-stakeholder consultations conducted in the framework of PAEPARD between 2010 and 2012 (Apr 2017).
- > **Factsheet:** Better vegetables, better lives. Improving African indigenous varieties for greater nutrition and livelihoods (Oct 2016).
- > **Factsheet:** Dealing with a hidden menace: reducing aflatoxin levels in groundnuts (Oct 2016).
- > **Factsheet:** The Red diamond: the extensive livestock value chain (Oct 2016).
- > **Factsheet:** COLEACP Users Led Process (Nov 2016).

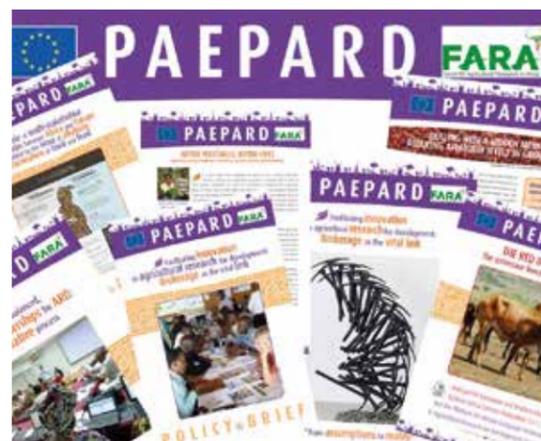
- Meeting of the EU-Africa HLPD in Addis Ababa, 4-5 April 2016, where the roadmap for implementing an Africa-EU research and innovation partnership on food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture was presented;
- The Global Forum on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD3) under the theme “No One Left Behind: Agri-food Innovation and Research for a Sustainable World”, Johannesburg 5-8 April 2016 where PAEPARD held a side event on ULP process and had a stand visited by more than 120 people;
- Africa Agriculture Science Week and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) General Assembly with the theme of “Apply Science, Impact livelihoods”, FARA, Kigali, 13-16 June 2016 where PAEPARD held a workshop, side event on the PAEPARD multi-stakeholder partnership and large stand visited by more than 150 people;
- *Future of User-Led Research and Innovation Partnerships: Learning from the PAEPARD Experience & Engaging with Eastern & Central Europe*, Prague, 29-30 November 2016. The European Forum for Agricultural Research for Development organized plenary sessions attended by more than 40 people and offered the European youth to learn from PAEPARD.

Set of PAEPARD publications.

## PAEPARD publications

Whilst external communication via the Dgroup, the PAEPARD blog and website (see section on external communication tools) was appreciated by various PAEPARD audiences and was generating considerable interest and engagement, the preparation of a new communication strategy highlighted the limited number of publications generated by the project for external stakeholders. PAEPARD activities were extensively documented in workshop reports and other documents but these had been largely written for an internal audience. Until 2014, the external visibility and influence of PAEPARD was very limited.

To address this issue, an editorial committee (publication task force) was established to



provide a full range of editing services in several languages to any consortia who wanted to publish a booklet, brochure, summary report, article or policy brief. A new graphic charter and branding design was developed to give PAEPARD publications a strong, common and homogeneous identity. PAEPARD business presentation slides, based on few templates, were developed for any PAEPARD member promoting and advocating for PAEPARD at international seminars. The same design was further used on the web, on posters and on social media so that PAEPARD became a recognizable brand, and PAEPARD projects could be better identified.

Since early 2016, external communication for PAEPARD has been promoted through a series of publications that give some analysis of the various experiences of PAEPARD. While activity reports document a lot of content about stakeholder relationships, innovation steps and the success or failure to obtain project funding, EC officers requested additional information to access reasons for behaviours, lessons from partnerships, and recommendations from evidence.

To address this, a number of topics were discussed and validated among a publication task force within PAEPARD, and editorial teams and deadlines were set up for each topic. Key

documents (more than 20 pages) and policy briefs (eight pages with recommendations for decision-makers and donors) were elaborated in English and French and made available on the website in PDF format, as well as displayed and shared in printed version at key ARD events in Africa and Europe.

The list of published topics includes: brokerage activity; benefits of multi-stakeholder partnerships; value of consultations (see box 5). Papers on communication and advocacy, ARD funding opportunities, and capacity strengthening are to be published by the end of 2017.

## Electronic newsletter

An electronic newsletter was introduced in 2015, which is sent out quarterly by email to PAEPARD DGroup to enhance PAEPARD visibility; each edition focuses on a specific topic of interest to the PAEPARD community.

The newsletter is certainly useful, but it has enabled PAEPARD to see that it is a somewhat outdated way of communicating. The project team/management realized that the PAEPARD information and communication platform should now integrate interactive tools, such as social media, to improve dissemination of information and exchanges among partners.



Communication workshop involving consortia and ULP representatives.

<sup>1</sup> Open access at l'url: <http://www.paepard.org/wakka.php?wiki=PublicationsPaepard>



## Conclusion: gaining experience

Any multi-stakeholder platform, like PAEPARD, is complex and multi-faceted, and ensuring that appropriate information is made available to users in a timely manner and in a form that can be easily understood and used is a major challenge. From the outset, it is critical for any initiative to develop a well-defined communication strategy that is developed collaboratively among partners to ensure a common understanding of objectives and approaches, and a sense of ownership and roles and responsibilities. Developing a clear and distinctive 'brand' for an initiative also helps to enhance visibility and strengthen ownership among project partners.

However, without leadership and strong management for communication activities, communication can be seen as a peripheral activity and one that is to be undertaken by 'someone else'. Or communication becomes rather ad hoc, dependent on the strength of individuals and valuable information may not be published or shared with other partners.

It is also important for an initiative to understand partners' incentives for communicating and to assist them in reaching their target audiences. A strong communication strategy is essential to identify key target audiences and tailored messages to be conveyed. To achieve this, communication specialists are needed but their role should be to provide guidance and facilitation (e.g. through development of information and communication tools, brand development and editing services).

**There is no effective communication without a strong communication and advocacy strategy, without leadership and tools that are duly addressing to the needs of partners.**

The varying information needs of different users (for internal and external audiences) and their preferred communication channels need to be recognized. A variety of communication tools, particularly Web 2.0 tools, now exist to help people share and publish information but it is critical to the success of a project to find those that work for its partners, which may require the development of a bespoke tool, and to provide relevant training in the selected tool if it is to be taken up and used effectively.

*Advocacy and communication initiative at the European Development Days 2017 held by the European Commission.*

It should also be realized that information and communication needs may evolve over time, influenced by changes in project orientation, and as a result of feedback from information users. This may lead to the emergence of new information and communication systems and, consequently, in the project strategy and tools designed and implemented to meet these needs.

Any external communication and advocacy initiative should try to systematically use the partners' existing networks since they are always more extensive than those woven by a project.

The use of social media as important and influential communication channels should not be neglected; not only are they an integral part

of the youth partners' culture but they can also provide a wealth of information and knowledge that is very useful for partnership brokerage.

Finally, the sustainability of the information and communication platform after the end of a project depends on two factors.

The first is related to the open access of the tools that make up the platform. Choosing open source tools allows them to be used for free and to evolve even after the end of the project.

The second factor is related to the hosting and animation of the platform, which will have to migrate, be hosted and led by a national, regional or international institution/organization in order to sustainably continue to provide brokerage and knowledge management services.



# PAEPARD



The Platform for Africa-Europe Partnership in Agricultural Research for Development (**PAEPARD**) is a 8-year project sponsored by the European Commission (80%) and partners' own contribution (20%).

It is coordinated by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (**FARA**) since December 2009, and extended until end of 2017.

It aims at building joint African-European multi-stakeholder partnerships in agricultural research for development (**ARD**) contributing to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. On the European side, the partners are **AGRINATURA** (The European Alliance on Agriculture Knowledge for Development, coordinating the European partners), **COLEACP** (representing the private sector), **CSA** (representing the NGOs), **ICRA**, specialized in capacity building in ARD, and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (**CTA**). On the African side and in addition to FARA, the partners are the Pan-African Farmers Organization (**PAFO**), the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (**RUFORUM**) based in Kampala, and the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (**FANRPAN**) based in Pretoria. PAFO involves its members that are the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (**EAFF**) based in Nairobi, the Réseaux des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs d'Afrique de l'Ouest (**ROPPA**) based in Ouagadougou, and the Plate-forme Régionale des Organisations Paysannes d'Afrique Centrale (**PROPAC**) based in Yaoundé. The Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (**SACAU**) is an associate partner of **PAEPARD**.



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