

ACIAR and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, developed in March 2005, looks at the responsibilities that both developing and developed countries have for delivering and managing aid in terms of five principles: ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability. Australia has signed undertakings that the aid program will align with Paris Declaration principles in a number of countries and regions, including Laos, Cambodia and the Pacific Island countries. Similar undertakings are under development in other countries, such as PNG.

As a specialised donor, ACIAR, through its projects and programs have aligned with the principles of the Paris Declaration for many years.

1. **Ownership: Partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies, and strategies to coordinate development actions.**

- **ACIAR recognises the leadership role of partner countries** in organisational policies through the establishment and operation of the **ACIAR Policy Advisory Council**. The Council which has had a majority of members from major developing country partners since its inception in 1982.
- ACIAR's partnership model not only is evident in setting priorities but in the co-leadership of projects. **All ACIAR projects have both an Australian (or International Agricultural Research Centre) leader and a developing country leader**. Project planning, monitoring and reporting is done in partnership through the co-leaders.
- ACIAR, through its training program, has a **particular emphasis on strengthening the leadership capacity of partner countries**. For several years, ACIAR has supported Masterclasses and in-country training on research management and leadership for partner country scientists. In 2003, the prestigious John Dillon Memorial Awards were instituted to provide specialised management training in Australia for emerging partner country managers. Capacity building through engagement of developing country partners in research project management and implementation was also recently acknowledged in an independent-conducted survey of ACIAR's overseas stakeholders.

2. **Alignment: Donors base their overall support on partner countries national development strategies, institutions and procedures**

- Partner countries and ACIAR agree priorities for research and development collaboration through formal consultation workshops held every four years, with reassessment of priorities on an annual basis. These align both with the overall Australian aid program strategy for the particular country (itself developed under Paris declaration principles) and with the partner country's own development plan for the agricultural forestry and fisheries sector. **All ACIAR support is thus in alignment with the national development strategies.**
- To ensure that projects developed in response to the agreed priorities are also designed in alignment with national development strategies, **the development strategies for each major partner country are also communicated through the ACIAR website** to ACIAR managers and prospective project leaders.
- Following an Overseas Stakeholder Survey conducted in 2007, **ACIAR is further strengthening the linkage of its project portfolio to the national development strategies** of partner countries in two ways. Consultative workshops will be used to ensure that the cluster of projects under development derives directly from the agreed program priorities and links closely with existing national development strategies. Further, ACIAR is developing larger projects that can more readily join with national development programs.
- **ACIAR uses the countries' own institutions and systems in each of its partner countries.** While ACIAR's programs also involve a range of private sector and NGOs, the major partners in virtually all projects are partner country Government Ministries and public research agencies. ACIAR has also maintained this approach in post-conflict or post-disaster situations in East Timor, Solomon Islands and Aceh, while recognising that capacity development requires extra attention in these circumstances.
- **Partner country systems and procedures are thus used routinely in projects for recruitment of partner country staff and procurement.** We avoid using separate, dedicated structures for project and program management except in exceptional circumstances. The selection of overseas project collaborators is undertaken in close consultation with the relevant authorities in each country, and government agreement to the project and its participants is a requirement for a contract to proceed. While ACIAR's funding is ultimately subject to annual appropriations from the Australian Government, in formal country consultations and at project signing indicative commitments are provided over a multi-year timeframe.

3. **Harmonisation. Donors' actions are more harmonised, transparent and collectively effective**

- As a specialist donor, supporting collaborative agricultural research for development, ACIAR is **dependent on both partner country systems and the programs of other donors to ensure that the results of successful agricultural research can be extended to communities** more broadly.
- Moreover, **in several countries, our explicit strategy is to underpin through research other donor programs.** Joint design missions for major projects have been held with AusAID, the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation and are now involved in joint program management. In Laos, ACIAR animal health and production research links closely with long-running EU investments in village animal production and veterinary services. For some years, in Vietnam we have managed joint activities with CIRAD and JIRCAS (citrus disease management) and in the Philippines with the Spanish Government (Landcare).
- We have requirement that all projects with CGIAR centres align closely with their Medium Term Plans, which are a **framework for investment by the World Bank, FAO and multiple bilateral donors.**

4. **Managing for Results. Managing resources and improving decision-making for results.**

- Following the 2006 Aid White Paper, **ACIAR will report against performance monitoring and assessment frameworks described in each whole-of government Australian aid program country strategy.** These are being mutually agreed with partner countries in the process of developing each country strategy.
- ACIAR's impact assessment program is continuing to monitor and evaluate previous research investments to both measure effectiveness and to inform future research directions.

5. **Mutual accountability. Donors and partners are accountable for development results.**

- ACIAR is committed to provide timely, transparent and comprehensive information on aid flows to partner country authorities. **Proposed flows and programs** are first discussed in-country with major counterparts and again at the ACIAR Policy Advisory Council's annual meeting ahead of finalisation of the ACIAR budget. **Detailed information on aid flows is published** on ACIAR's website and in hard copy annually, as soon as possible after the Australian budget is released.