

FUNDING OF LARGE-SCALE PARTNERSHIPS FOR CO-OWNERSHIP; WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T

Policy Brief

- 1.** We need to move from small, scattered, and inefficient projects to co-operative, large-scale and aligned programmes. This is possible if we move toward jointly funded partnerships.
- 2.** We need to find a way to balance the ownership: to fully engage both European and African partners in all the steps of the programme.
- 3.** We are looking for the perfect funding instrument that allows direct or joint funding, joint management and multi-donor trust funds.

NEW ERA IN AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH FUNDING FOR GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

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The time is ripe for more consolidation of efforts for agricultural research as a means of improving food and nutrition security. This means a shift from financing smaller projects to funding large-scale partnerships where partners join forces to meet complex challenges. The result is less fragmentation and duplication of efforts, which in turn allows resources to work for translation of research results into farmer knowledge and fact-based influence on policy for development.

NEW BALANCE IN THE CURRENT FUNDING LANDSCAPE

Genuine co-ownership of projects between African and European countries have been few within the area of Science Technology and Innovation (STI), not least in the specific area of food security thematic programming (FSTP). Bi-regional cooperation has been dependent upon the European partners who almost exclusively manage the projects even if it has an African co-funder. Indeed, the majority of financial instruments that support Africa-Europe STI cooperation are of European and international origin. This unbalanced partnership threatens the effectiveness of bi-regional cooperation.

LARGE-SCALE JOINT PARTNERSHIPS IN THEMSELVES ARE COMPLEX

In an effort to find good future models for funding, we here briefly summarize the results of a review of previous and on-going large scale partnerships.

- We identify which existing funding instruments allow for more equal ownership and there by cooperation.
- We also ask how the instruments that have proven to be less successful in equal ownership could be changed to create more equality between partners.

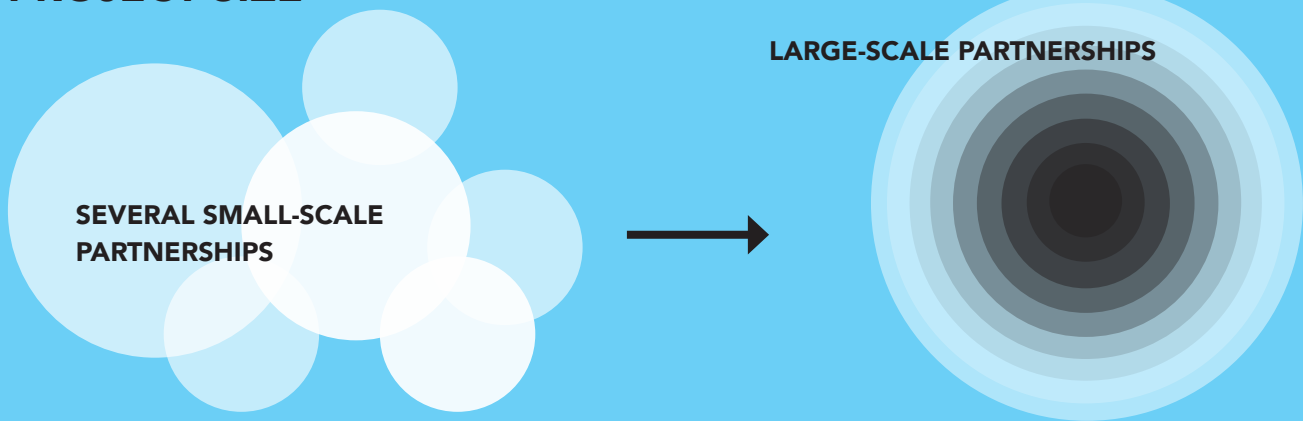
FEW PROGRAMS WITH FOCUS ON RESEARCH FUNDING

Our findings show that the majority of FSTP funding is targeted at development, not research. A great deal of food security research funding goes to the CGIAR's International Agricultural Research Centers and their research programs (CRPs).

There are however notable examples of African and European instruments that are being mobilized to support bi-regional research cooperation. Within European schemes there was for example, a joint funding in the Seventh Framework Program for EU that proved to have tremendous value in the bi-regional cooperation. These schemes mobilized national research funds in Europe and Africa to support jointly-funded research programs. They were successful because they allowed the opportunity for African and European partners to jointly define the research priorities and the fields of science in which countries decide to collectively invest. They allowed for more balanced partnerships and cooperation. In one such model (ERAfrica) the EU covered administrative costs while the participating countries funded research grants. In this case the amount of funding granted to project participants from a given country/region under a joint call was in proportion to the budget contributed by that country/region.

3 THINGS WE NEED TO CHANGE

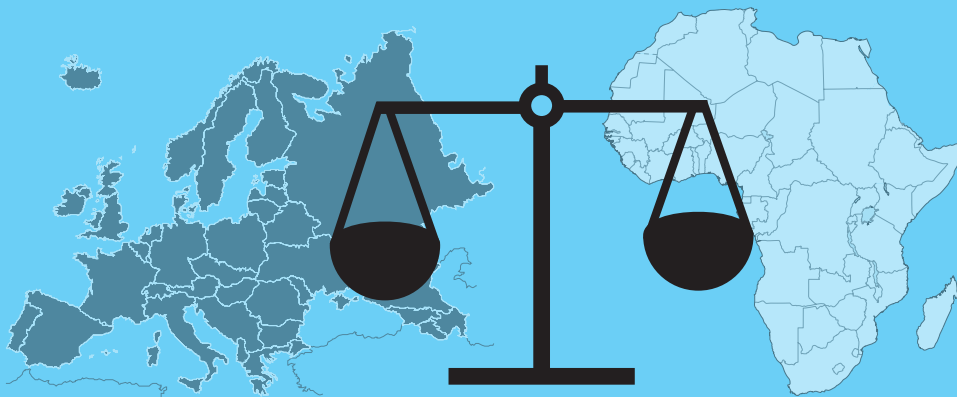
PROJECT SIZE



Instead of fragmented small projects, where duplication of efforts is usual...

...we work towards funding large-scale partnerships where partners join forces to meet complex challenges.

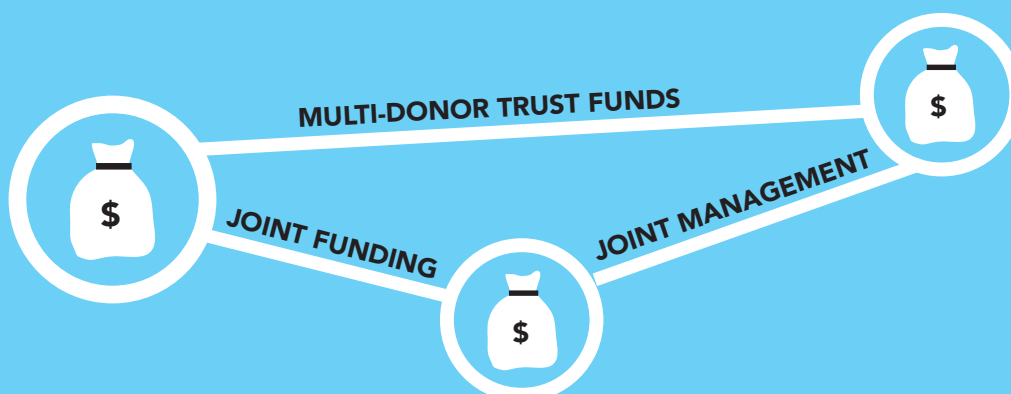
BALANCED CO-OWNERSHIP



WHAT?

Bi-regional cooperation has been dependent upon the European partners who almost exclusively manage the projects. These unbalanced partnerships threaten the effectiveness of bi-regional cooperation.

THE RIGHT FUNDING INSTRUMENT



HOW?

Funding instruments that allow direct or joint funding, joint management and multi-donor trust funds are useful instruments for flexible funding and enhancement of long-term research partnerships.

New alliances have enormous potential that give new dimensions to long-term partnerships. Both can be equally productive.



MODELS THAT WORKED

Good funding models can be found in a number of programs from various funding sources. The full review article (found on PROIntensAfrica website) gives explicit examples, we here outline the general trends.

The many collaborative arrangements between the European and African partners are often bilateral and reflect long-term historical ties. Our results indicate the relatively new relationships between countries that have not had such long-term foundations are equally productive.

Collaborative initiatives that were established and funded jointly by European and African governments and those that used bilateral Science Technology and Innovation cooperation agreements to mobilize resources have been successful. Such an initiative, between Finland and South Africa, is one of the few cases where an African country contributed to a regional initiative. Another such initiative between Ghana and The International Development Agency led to the successful harmonization of procedures, dissemination of knowledge and also to the coordination of the monitoring and evaluation activities within West and Central Africa region.

Programs that showed exemplary collaborative arrangement included one on application

of technological innovations that was funded by EU's Sector Budget Support and was implemented and managed by the South African Department of Science and Technology.

MODELS THAT DID NOT WORK AS WELL

In some funding programs EU and European national agencies, for various reasons, did not allow resources to be allocated to third countries. Although the African partners in these cases were fully engaged in the projects, they were involved on a sub-contractual basis while the European partners were direct grant beneficiaries. The subtle, yet very important ownership aspects of these projects resulted in an unbalanced partnership.

Yet another example of the importance of project ownership, but on a different level, is illustrated in the case of a three year project with diverse international funding sources. The government delegated the responsibility of a program to its implementing agencies, rather than keeping it at the governmental level. This undermined the ability of the program and its objectives to be involved in budget dialogs between ministries. The reduced ownership of the program by the government made it difficult for the program results to make an impact on national policy issues.

Ownership issues were important on several levels: on the balanced and genuine partnerships within academia, in the translation of science to application within the sector, and on the level of governments where national policy was based on program results.

FUNDING AND GETTING FUNDED

The mechanisms of funding - from both the donor side and from the research application side essentially dictate the potential of the program. Both sides can benefit from improvements. Sharper instruments that are tailored to research for development are needed just as are sharper applications from the recipient side.

Funding instruments that allow direct or joint funding, joint management and multi-donor trust funds are useful instruments for flexible funding and enhancement of long-term research partnerships. This core-funding approach allows for funding of research areas that are strategically important but would otherwise be neglected due difficulties in getting competitive funding. On the other hand, the competitive calls are regarded as enhancing cost efficiency and generate bright and novel ideas. The disadvantages is the short-term of the funded project (just a few years). Additionally, the competitive-call procedures require time and monetary investments of establishing protocols for setting rigid quality criteria, reviewing the applications, as well as impact evaluation and follow up. The competitive funding is usually insufficient to translate the new knowledge to application or to contribute to policy issues. Weaker national universities in Africa have been less successful in winning the competitive calls.

Some of the obstacles faced by research sponsors in Europe when awarding funding to African universities are weaknesses in financial reporting and project management. Capacity building investments in research management and economic revision are changing this situation.

LESSONS LEARNED:

Program ownership was essential for balanced and engaged partnerships and that fair resource allocation was the key to ownership.

The mechanisms of funding - from both the donor side and from the research application side essentially dictate the potential of the program.

A core-funding approach allows strategically important but otherwise neglected research areas to gain attention. Competitive calls can exclude weaker national universities in Africa that may actually have the bright ideas that are needed.

There is almost a complete absence of dedicated funding instruments for the objectives of the African-European STI partnerships.

Investments in institutional capacity development at African universities, in areas such as writing competitive grant applications, research management, and tools for economic revision can remove some of the obstacles in attracting international research funding.



PROIntensAfrica

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security in Africa

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