



ICRA's achievements

Making a difference

ICRA has played a pioneering role in building capacities in agricultural research for development (ARD). Our 'hands-on' style and 'real world' team assignments provide a unique mode of learning, while the analyses and action plans formulated during the field studies add value to the process. We have already begun to change outlooks: the need for a holistic and multidisciplinary approach implemented through teams and partnerships is much more widely accepted now than it was 20 years ago, when ICRA started. Since its inception, 943 professionals have participated in ICRA learning programmes and ICRA teams have completed 145 field studies.

Enhancing interaction and promoting change

Although ICRA's achievements are difficult to quantify, there have been demonstrable improvements in the capabilities of individuals and institutions. Individual participants have acquired a range of new skills, programmes have found new directions, institutes have enhanced their focus and, in some cases, broader development objectives have been met. While institutional change and development are likely to be the result of several factors (only one of which is ICRA learning), surveys of our alumni show that ICRA often plays an important role. Many ICRA alumni have become agents of change within their home institutions and have played key roles in redirecting research and development to improve the lives and livelihoods of smallholders and other rural poor.

Surveys indicate that 68% of ICRA alumni have gone on to train other colleagues. Many of them are being hired as consultants, used as resource persons in training programmes, participating in curriculum development, taking up additional responsibilities and serving on committees. For example, one alumnus in India is a member of a technology support

A network of ICRA alumni in Ghana

'Coming from a traditional research background, I had a niggling feeling that what I was doing in the field was kind of hit and run', remembers Joyce Bruce, a researcher at the Nyankpala Animal Research Institute in Ghana. 'The ICRA programme showed me a range of participatory research tools and gave me the confidence to use different methods. And my ability to compromise and search for common ground has been greatly strengthened.'

'I became a much better listener and teamwork manager following ICRA training in group dynamics', adds Naaminong Karbo, who heads the Nyankpala station. 'Since ICRA, we have put smallholder farmers much more in the driving seat and have introduced working groups consisting of many different stakeholders.'

As the numbers of ICRA alumni increase, their multiplier effect also increases. Joyce and Naaminong have been involved in forming a network of alumni who will work together to create a greater voice for change in Ghana.

The ICRA training course has helped in other ways too. 'We have seen an increase in the amount of contract research coming our way and this is vital for the survival of the institute, since government funding has decreased by a third in recent years and we have to make up the deficit', says Joyce. 'We are now being recognised as a team that does good work and delivers on time. Our ICRA experience has helped us work efficiently and our project proposals are usually successful in securing funding.'

unit, a consultancy group, a committee for re-orienting training courses, a participatory rural appraisal group, an international programme group (which seeks opportunities for international collaboration and funding) and an interinstitutional project development group!

On an institutional level, ICRA learning has helped to strengthen capacity, improve the quality and quantity of outputs, enhance performance and recognition, and stimulate change.

Fostering long-term collaboration

Over the years, ICRA's strategy has evolved from providing courses for individuals to engaging more continuously with institutions, helping to build teams and partnerships that

can influence institutional change and development in the longer term.

In the coming decade we will aim to build still further on these foundations, as we work to develop capacity building networks of education and R&D organisations that span both developed and developing countries. By building additional capacity for ICRA-style learning activities in the South, we can expand the scope of our activities and make best use of our limited resources.



Changing outlooks

Where ICRA alumni have become programme leaders, they have often brought about changes in the orientation of research. Tesfaye Shimber, head of the national coffee research programme in Ethiopia writes: 'Using my experiences at ICRA, I insisted on changing the research approach. We now involve various disciplines in planning the research process and conducting studies to address production problems.'

Walter Anyanga, a plant breeder in Uganda's national research system, states: 'I now take an interest in other stakeholders who have a role to play in delivering the technologies I develop to end-users. Because of this I have been appointed to the Board of Directors of one of the NGOs that is supporting national production of oil crops.'

Leonardo Salazar became a station director in Venezuela's National Fund for Agricultural Research (FONAIAP) and was asked to participate in a Latin America-wide initiative to promote institutional change. 'The concepts and approaches I learned at ICRA were invaluable to my role in the development of this potentially far-reaching initiative. We have multiplied the ICRA effect by using the ICRA learning materials to develop the skills of our researchers and extensionists. We have formed several interinstitutional research-extension teams and they are currently working with many different stakeholders and communities to formulate new projects. This experience will be used to develop further collaboration between development organizations in Venezuela and Mexico.'