

**Improving CGIAR Effectiveness through Knowledge Sharing (KS)  
A project of the ICT-KM Program of the CGIAR**

**Contact Information – Project Leader**

Last Name	Grando
First Name	Stefania
Email address	<a href="mailto:s.grando@cgiar.org">s.grando@cgiar.org</a>
Organization Name	ICARDA
Telephone/ Fax/ Skype	+963 21 2213433/ +963 21 2213490

**Project Details**

Title of Proposal	International Farmers Conference
Area (please include one area: KS in Research; Institutional KS; Virtual Team)	KS in research
List of staff/partners and expertise working on the project	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ICARDA: Dr. S. Grando, Project Leader (Breeder)</li> <li>2. CENESTA (NGO): Ms. Maryam Rahmanian</li> <li>3. Staff of the National Center for Agricultural Research and Technology Transfer (NCARTT), Jordan</li> <li>4. University of Tlemcen, Algeria: Dr. M. Labdi</li> <li>5. CGIAR Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis (PRGA): Dr. B. Gurung</li> </ol>
Project Duration using Grant Funds (in month)	12 months
Country(ies) of Implementation / Languages used or needed for virtual team projects	Syria

## **PROBLEM DEFINITION:**

Varietal development is one of the main tools for improving crop production and alleviating poverty in rural areas through agricultural development. Breeding philosophies and methodologies developed for favorable conditions and high input agriculture have been ineffective in generating improved cultivars for marginal conditions and low input agriculture. This has produced a gap between the attributes that formally-trained plant breeders look for and those preferred by farmers, leading to poor adoption of most released varieties. This gap is being addressed by participatory plant breeding (PPB); the success of the approach is evidenced by rapid development of new cultivars which are being adopted eagerly by farmers. The approach has been used successfully for many crops (rice, barley, cassava, beans, sweet potato etc.) throughout the developing world. However, PPB itself is being adopted relatively slowly despite its proven efficacy.

In addition to farmers, PPB primarily involves plant breeders, social scientists and biodiversity conservationists. Despite all focusing on helping farmers, plant breeders seldom link with conservationists, social scientists usually have an uneasy relationship with plant breeders; ethnologists and anthropologists, though potentially the academic heart of PPB, rarely appear to be involved in PPB. This lack of cross-fertilisation is strongly evidenced in publications: cross-reference is not practiced by anthropologists, ethnologists and other scientists involved in PPB, publishing in different journals. There has also been little contact between researchers and conservationists often linked with local NGOs. The absence of cross-linkages between these various stakeholders, despite their common focus on farmers, has constrained development of PPB by preventing intellectual cross-fertilisation of ideas and by preventing each building on the achievements of the others.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

The project has the following three objectives:

1. To bring to the attention of a wider scientific community, and to document the knowledge of farming communities worldwide and its potential value for plant breeding, particularly for developing countries;
2. To demonstrate the importance of recognizing and strengthening such knowledge and skills to make processes (e.g. participatory plant breeding), products (e.g. client-orientated varieties), and services (e.g. deployment of new varieties) targeted, relevant and appropriate; and
3. To stimulate a wider range of institutions in agriculture to recognize the importance of systematically documented of farmers' knowledge in research prioritization, development and implementation.

## **PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION:**

This is a new project, but the idea has originated by the contacts that the partners have with farmers in their participatory research activities. Although, such a large and inclusive conference has not been organized in the past, there are instances of farmers' participation in some national and international conferences and of their contributions with their knowledge.

The knowledge documented in such conferences has proved very useful in the agricultural development.

The project will be implemented by organizing a Farmers' conference in which farmers (both men and women) from countries where Participatory Breeding Programs have been implemented, will be addressing an audience of plant breeders, social scientists, and biodiversity conservationists from different organizations and will be sharing their experience and knowledge. We plan to invite farmers from a number of countries ranging from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Yemen, Algeria, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Iran, Morocco, and other developing countries and a few developed countries such as France, Australia, Italy, etc. depending on the amount of funds available. Unlike most researcher-led meetings, in this conference, farmers' knowledge and farmers' successes in developing new cultivars will have centre-stage.

We have accumulated a large body of anecdotal evidence of the existence and the extent of farmers' knowledge, and the project will allow it to be brought to the attention of the wider scientific community as well as of the donor community.

The project will be implemented by ICARDA in collaboration with national and international NGOs, NARES and farmers of involved countries.

The project will be implemented in the 12 months following the approval.

The requested budget is US\$ 30,000. The requested budget will be matched by funds from other projects and other donors (developed countries participants).

### **EXPECTED RESULTS:**

The main *outputs* of the project will be: (i) much wider official acknowledgement and recognition of the existence of farmers' knowledge and skills, (ii) building alliances between communities, and between communities and researchers, and amongst researchers which bring diverse levels of expertise and knowledge together to create platforms for dialogue and decision-making that ensure viability, ownership and sustainability.

The *outcomes* of the project will be measured by: (i) the response of the donors to the need of acknowledging farmers' knowledge officially by many organizations in evaluating research and development projects; (ii) the number of partnerships and joint projects and alliances of partners developed by building on the farmers' knowledge; (iii) the number of research projects using participatory approaches not only in their implementation but also in their formulation; and (iv) the number of similar conferences organized at country or regional level aiming at a more detailed documentation of farmers' knowledge.

### **INNOVATION:**

We are not aware of any similar meetings bringing together under one roof farmers, plant breeders, social scientists, biodiversity conservationists, ethnologists and anthropologists and from different organisations. PPB is currently performing like a wheel which has a central hub (farmers), with a few spokes present (plant breeders, social scientists, biodiversity conservationists), a couple of spokes generally missing (ethnologists and anthropologists) and a rim exemplified by the absence of exchange of knowledge between most of the spokes

and is weak even where it occurs. Our meeting will be the first at which a complete ‘wheel’ is generated.

**REPLICABILITY:**

The project has an international connotation, and its results will be publicized globally. It is a very simple idea that can be easily replicated at the regional country levels by organizing smaller national or regional conferences but with increased participation of local stakeholders from different ethnic groups and races documenting the socio-cultural knowledge and indigenous knowledge of the various regions. The project idea can be implemented in the different CGIAR centers and Programs using participatory research approach.