Learning from partnerships for multi-functional agriculture:
A decade of CIIFAD experiences in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia

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Introduction
Partnership approaches in international agricultural and rural development have gained much currency in the international development lexicon in recent decades as previous models of rural and agricultural development have proven inadequate in resolving complex socio economic and agro-ecological challenges assailing the rural milieu. Emerging models for a more sustainable development approach reflect strong orientations toward poverty reduction, food security, and sustainable livelihoods as apposed to earlier, more narrow commitments to production maximization and economic efficiency. While such models suggest a growing understanding that securing food, eradicating poverty and protecting natural resources are intertwined goals, they also throw into relief the complexity and diversity embodied in the management of such production systems, and highlights the enormity of the challenge.

The Cornell International Institute for Food Agriculture and Development (CIIFAD) recognized at its earliest inception that strong partnerships and collaborations between public and private institutional stakeholders in research, extension and policy –from farmers, to local grassroots associations, NGOs, researchers, and political leaders would constitute the fundamental basis for addressing the challenges of poverty and sustainability of livelihood systems. In the last ten years, research and extension collaborators at Cornell University have forged partnership relationships with agricultural stakeholders worldwide, leveraging comparative advantages and mobilizing resources for participatory and interdisciplinary research and extension towards improvements in livelihood systems, poverty alleviation and conservation of the natural resource base.

It is being more widely acknowledged that fostering productive uses of local resources is among the surest avenues for reducing poverty and securing long-term benefits for people and the environment. But to accomplish such changes will require more effective local, regional and national institutional partnerships and community participation.

Purpose of the Poster
This poster will portray a visual and critical reflection on the process, outcomes and substantive lessons learned in facilitating a broad-based partnership model of international research and extension that promotes sustainable agriculture and rural development in complex, diverse and risk-prone agro-ecological environments worldwide. It will visually illuminate the process of partnership building between Cornell’s CIIFAD and collaborating institution and stakeholders in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Africa to illuminate the critical dimensions of successful partnerships, focusing on lessons learned and their implications for sustainable agricultural research and extension worldwide.

Conclusions and Educational and Extension Implications
The conclusions illuminate the importance of flexibility, sustained engagement of stakeholders and a learning approach to partnership building constitute fundamental basis of effective partnerships among diverse stakeholders in international research and extension. The CIIFAD approach predicated on flexibility, shared interests and negotiation, grounded in a learning systems approach offers a useful educational model for collaborative research and extension for sustainable agriculture and natural resources management.