Summary - Innovation Labs Debriefing Meetings

April 2020

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1. PARTICIPANTS

PARTICIPANTS MEETING OF 11.02.2020

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PARTICIPANTS MEETING OF 19.03.2020

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2. BACKGROUND TO DEBRIEFING MEETINGS

After almost a year of implementation of the "Innovation Labs", it seemed useful to take stock of the experience of the RUs, the Management, the R&D project managers and the working group leaders (14 people).

Two meetings were organised on 11 February and 19 March 2020. The first meeting brought together the management, the RUs and the R&D project leaders. The second meeting was attended by the leaders of the "Innovation labs" working groups, a management consultant and the R&D project managers.

The objective of these two meetings was to provide feedback on the "Innovation labs" in order to identify areas for improvement, in particular through a brainstorming session that addressed the following questions

- What were our expectations?

- What were the positive and negative points?

- What do we want to improve for current and future Innovation Labs?

The aim of this document is to summarise the data collected at these two meetings for each question in order to enable decisions to be taken on improvements to be made to the Innovation Labs. The raw data can be found in the annex at the end of this document.

3. EXPECTATIONS

Ranking of expectations from most important (most cited) to least important (least cited):

1. **Innovation / new projects**
   The most important expectation was the development/push of new fundable projects with an innovative dimension in terms of concept, model, partnership or technology.

2. **ADA positioning / strategy**
   The 2nd main expectation was to have a positioning of ADA on each of the key themes in order to define an action plan on the theme, to orientate our future projects and to better communicate with potential donors and partners.

3. **Sharing / synergy between units**
An important expectation was also to foster collective thinking through the sharing of experience and knowledge between project officers from different units and thus strengthen synergies between units.

4. **Methodology**
The least cited expectation (3 times) was the evolution of our methodological approach to define our intervention process (OCD, problems to be solved...).

4. POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE POINTS

The positive and negative points of the Innovation Labs have been associated with each expectation mentioned in the previous section. This structure makes it possible to highlight the extent to which each expectation was met or not.

4.1. SHARING/SYNERGIES BETWEEN UNITS

4.1.1. POSITIVE POINTS

Many positive points were raised in relation to the sharing and synergies developed. The majority agree that the Innovation Labs have helped to promote :

— knowledge and information sharing between project officers from different units;
— the creation of a dynamic of reflection and internal exchange;
— the establishment of a framework and space for reflection/concertation;
— the creation of synergies between units;
— transversality ;
— team spirit - enthusiasm ;
— the involvement and commitment of the participants in the reflections.

4.1.2. NEGATIVE POINTS

Although the sharing and collective reflections are appreciated and constructive for creating synergies between units and project officers, the majority of people mentioned the difficulty of having regular participation of teams and management in all meetings due to the busy assignments and agendas of the group members.

Furthermore, more involvement of U3 and U5 would be beneficial to strengthen the sharing and innovation dynamics.

4.2. POSITIONING/CONTENT ON THE THEME

4.2.1. POSITIVE POINTS

There are several positive points:

— Taking a step back from our projects through collective reflection
— Progress on some themes:
  • Microinsurance and financial flows ;
  • Youth/MPE merger (YES);
  • Capacity building: methodological developments ;
  • Linking agricultural finance and climate ;

- Digital finance: definition of a strategy with a double constraint: 1. to be customers and address key needs of target populations; and 2. for services and products with a proven business model. The digital dimension has been added as a control and management factor.
— Strengthening the interest and visibility of the "inclusive insurance" theme, which was not yet well structured. The microinsurance pager was used to update the communication on the ADA website.

4.2.2. NEGATIVE POINTS

The positioning on certain themes remained very broad. Some difficulties were mentioned in defining a precise positioning, particularly in terms of geography, subjects to specialise in and partners to target. This can be explained by a lack of information and analysis of the sector necessary to justify choices.

4.3. METHODOLOGY

4.3.1. POSITIVE POINTS

— The support of the R&D team is appreciated by the group leaders, especially in terms of tools, coordination and follow-up;
— Change in thinking and formulation ;
— A remark was made about the quality and motivation of the moderators/group leaders.

4.3.2. NEGATIVE POINTS

— Despite methodological support, some difficulties were mentioned in formalising and producing the outputs of the Innovation Labs (ToC, 2 pagers and new project). This can be explained by the fact that this is a new exercise that requires appropriation. Moreover, this work is added to the operational activities of the project leaders who do not always have the time to carry out this theoretical work of formalisation.

4.4. INNOVATION/ NEW PROJECTS

4.4.1. POSITIVE POINTS

Few positive points noted

— Only one person mentioned that the Innovation Labs had helped to define a strategy for action and the impetus for new projects.

4.4.2. UN BILAN NEGATIVE POINTS

— Difficulty in bringing real innovation into the thinking. Lack of creativity. We tend to stick to what ADA is already doing. The difficulties in innovating can be explained in part by a lack of preparatory work upstream (information/monitoring on the theme). In addition, some people think that the objective of the Innovation Labs was too focused on the "new project" output, and not enough on reflection.

— Not enough concrete project proposals. Some reflections remained too theoretical. Some mentioned the difficulty of moving from a ToC and a positioning to a concrete project. According to some feedback, this difficulty can be explained in part by a need for validation by management and a methodological

need to define a concrete action plan to lead to a project. There is often an opportunistic strategy for defining new projects, which is not a problem for some people.

Conclusion:

Overall, the positive points of the Innovation Labs are more related to the dynamics of sharing and reflection on the positioning of ADA on the themes than to innovation/new projects and methodology. Indeed, a certain number of negative points were mentioned on these last two elements which deserve future improvements.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS :

5.1. WHAT DO WE WANT TO IMPROVE FOR THE NEW INNOVATION LABS?

At the methodological level to promote innovation and the production of outputs from the Innovation Labs

— **Strengthen the monitoring** upstream and throughout the working group's reflections:
   o Need to have a presentation of the context of the theme and the field of possibilities upstream of the discussions (state of the art of the theme). This will allow everyone to start from the same level of knowledge;
   o Bringing together all ADA initiatives on the theme ;
   o Involve external resource persons on a case-by-case basis to enrich the thinking;
   o Participation in selected conferences to collect trends, identify and meet potential partners to foster project opportunities;

Decision: Adapt the methodology guide by integrating the watch before the ToC is carried out

— **Define concrete steps** to arrive at the definition of a concrete project: choice of country(ies), identification of potential partners, relationship with sector actors, identification of key actors specialised on new projects.

— Part of the ToC input implies a good part of the success conditions for ADA programmes. It would be important to work on this part as these partnerships should be the basis for successful programmes.

— **Each Innovation Lab** needs to be **treated differently** because the level of maturity is not the same for each theme

— **Strengthen the validation spaces** in order to involve the management's choices and to have their green light to implement a concrete action plan allowing the development of new projects. This recommendation is not shared by everyone.

Decision: At the end of the Innovation Lab, to arrive at a positioning of ADA on the theme in the form of 2 pagers (target countries, orientations, etc.) to be validated by the management. Based on these two pagers, the leader will be asked to identify one or more projects to be presented to management. A decision will then be taken to launch the formulation of the project with a prospecting mission. In general, management will participate in the Innovation Labs when it can, and will ensure that it is present when there is a need for validation at key stages of the reflection.

— Put more emphasis on the formulation of concrete projects/initiatives provided that the required inputs are available;

— **Give a more precise deadline** (e.g. 2-3 months) to come up with a concrete proposal or drop the issue temporarily.

At the organisational level to promote sharing and synergies between units

— **Plan meeting agendas in advance** to block slots early. The leader should set the group dynamics;

— Consider **online discussions** if necessary to facilitate the participation of as many people as possible;

— **No obligation to have everyone** at every meeting. There are 3-4 key people who are compulsory and the others are "nice to have". The presence of the management in the meetings should not be mandatory. "It is up to the staff to convince the management about the Innovation Labs. If some people are not available, ask them to send their inputs before the meeting;

— **Encourage people to read the minutes** of the last meeting before the next meeting, especially if they were absent at the previous meeting.

5.2. WHAT IS THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE CURRENT INNOVATION LABS?

— **Establish the Innovation Lab dynamic on an ongoing basis** to encourage initiatives when opportunities arise. This would allow :
  - share information / keep up to date with what is happening on the theme (projects, events, monitoring, etc.)
  - get the full picture
  - follow up on current and potential projects
  - identify new actions/projects

— Innovation labs must remain **productive** with **concrete results**.

Decision: Meeting to be scheduled with Management, Advisors, RU, Innovation Labs leaders and CP R&D to define the orientation of the current Innovation Labs.

Annexes - raw data

White boxes: inputs from the meeting of 11 February

Orange boxes: inputs from the 19 March meeting

Expectations

Positioning of ADA	Sharing/synergies between units	Innovation/new projects	Methodology
Define the positioning of ADA on priority themes	To develop our thinking on our key themes based on the project experiences of the different units >> SHARING	Be better prepared to respond to calls for tender	Develop our intervention methodology (ToC, impact measurement,...)
To arrive at orientations/positioning of ADA on each theme	Strengthen communication and exchange between CPs/Units	Innovating in projects	Encourage reflection on the problems to be solved >> Diagnostic phase
ADA's position on the subject	Create synergies between units on the themes >> COLLECTIVE REFLECTION	New partners	To clearly define the work of ADA in developing access to finance for young people
Begin to gradually reorient the ADA strategy towards promising themes and future projects	Reflecting and sharing	Identify new projects with an innovative dimension: partners, model, new technologies >> INNOVATION	
Giving a more visible and important place to the theme at ADA	Break down silos between units by involving people from different units	New project tracks	
Define an action strategy	Consensus on the themes	Create spaces for reflection between teams on specific themes. Objective:	

		to build/arrive at new ideas/projects/initiatives	
To have a well-defined and innovative strategy for each of the themes concerned that can be attractive to potential donors and allow us to test new things.		Initiating new projects	
Give the opportunity to the staff (in my opinion the best placed) to feed the strategic reflections of ADA and its Board		Define new fundable projects	
		revitalise our work in this area	
		Thinking about/finding new innovations on youth funding within a well-defined framework.	
		Impetus for new projects	
		testing new things.	
		Instilling a dynamic of reflection and innovation within ADA	
		To bring out new concrete projects	

POSITIVE POINTS

Content/ positioning	Sharing/synergies between units	Sharing space	Methodological support

The reflections to build the ToC	Interactions between units (+ synergies)	Structured innovation space	Support from the R&D team appreciated - tool, coordination and follow-up.
Taking a step back from our projects	Information sharing and reflection between project officers from different units	We now have a framework for reflection and a space for reflection/concertation	Support for the research team
Progress on some themes: • Insurance and financial flows • Youth/YES merger • DRC: methodological developments • Linking agriculture and climate	Sharing information between units		Change in the way of thinking and formulating (... even if not for all)
Showed/reinforced interest in certain topics (insurance)	Enthusiasm of the teams to participate and share		The quality and motivation of the moderators
On the whole approach part the group has made good progress to quickly arrive at a double constraint strategy: 1. to be client centric and address key needs of the targeted populations, and 2. For services and products with a proven business model. To this was added the digital dimension as a control and management factor	Real exchanges between participants		
Conclusion (and logical follow-up) to make a single group for young people and entrepreneurs, with possible trajectories within our MFI/IF partners - for a young person who is potential to work with microfinance (traditional ADA track) or to explore larger funding with appropriate	A means of creating a dynamic of reflection and internal exchange		

follow-up and accompaniment (YES fund Initiative, more innovative)			
Giving a more visible and important place to the theme at ADA Define an action strategy Impetus for new projects	Transversality		
The 2 pager was used to update the communication on the ADA website	Everyone's part was important in the discussions and the group members gave their contribution		
Now we have an OCD for each of the themes	Involvement of participants		
	Team spirit		
	Teamwork		
	Involvement of staff (participants were generally very committed)		
	Inter-unit participation		
	Encouraging initiative		

NEGATIVE POINTS

Focus too much on the "new project" output	Methodological difficulties	Difficulties in producing the expected results	Lack of validation of outputs	Difficulties in innovating	Difficulties organizational
Too much focus on the launch of a project	Difficulties in moving from a ToC + positioning to a concrete project (too broad a positioning?)	Positioning remained very broad, difficulty in defining a precise positioning, particularly in geographical terms	Few validated positions	It seems to me that the innovation part is not clearly highlighted for each theme	Intervention dynamics: difficult to have regular participation of teams
Not all have the same objectives (project first)	Difficulties in formalising	Little positioning defined	Decisions not always written and validated (just discussions)	The reflections often remained too much stuck to what ADA does. We didn't think outside the box enough	Presence of management in all labs
Too much focus on outputs than on reflections	ToC remains too "theoretical" an exercise	Difficulties in obtaining results: formulation of documents, 2 pagers,...	lack of validation of outputs	Lack of information/upstream monitoring. Need to do preparatory work	Some people not available to participate
	Difficulty in moving from thematic reflection to innovation/ positioning, Toc, project proposal, canvassing for funders	Few new projects			Difficulties in mobilising everyone

	Difficulty in bringing real innovation to the thinking (lack of inspiration?)	Few concrete projects completed			U5 participation
	Lack of creativity	It was difficult to take action after doing the 2 pager			Time consuming for leaders?
	At some points, participants asked for validation by the management when this was not necessary.	We keep an opportunistic strategy, but I don't think that's a problem.			Finding a discussion slot was not easy with everyone's agendas.
		Not enough concrete project proposals (some reflections remained too theoretical)			Availability of members
		Define niches/topics on which to specialise (energy, consumption, health, education...) and find target partners >>Difficulties in justifying choices			Ensure regular participation of all those involved due to busy schedules.
		From the TOC, how can we look for potential partners who could have added value?			
		Think about having a detailed timeline on the			

		parts included in the ToC (Include a timeline of activities for the follow-up and different potential partners,			

RECOMMENDATIONS

The text in black represents the inputs from the meeting on 11 February.
The text in red represents the inputs from the 19 March meeting.

Monitoring to feed the output of the Innovation Labs:
— Need to have a presentation of the context of the theme and the field of possibilities upstream of the discussions (state of the art of the theme). This will allow everyone to start from the same level of knowledge;
— Need to do preparatory work: monitoring, bringing in experts, etc.
— It remains to be seen whether it is appropriate to involve external resource persons on a case-by-case basis to enrich the reflections.
— Strengthen synergies between existing projects to define a path;
— You should go and hang out at all the conferences, do some research. In my opinion, it's the opportunities that will make the positioning
— In AidPortfolio, it is possible to tag partners on themes

Methodology :

— Each Innovation Lab needs to be treated differently because the level of maturity is not the same for each theme
— The discussion format: some of the inputs in the final document (ToC) imply many of the conditions for successful ADA programmes. It would be important to identify who to work on these parts as these partnerships should be the basis for successful programmes.
— Give a more precise deadline (e.g. 2-3 months) to come up with a concrete proposal or drop the subject temporarily
— Define concrete steps to move forward: choice of country(ies), identification of potential partners, relationship with sector players, identification of key players specialising in new projects
— The leader must set the dynamics of the group.
— Importance of reading the minutes of the last meeting before the next meeting.
— Involvement of U3 (except in some groups) and U5 (availability constraints are understandable but seeking to involve U3 and U5 more would be beneficial to the dynamic).
— Strengthen validation spaces to involve management choices;
— At some points, participants asked for validation by the management when this was not necessary.
— We keep an opportunistic strategy, but I don't think that's a problem.

Organisation:

— Perhaps online discussions could be envisaged in the future.
— Plan meeting agendas in advance
— You don't always have to have everyone. There are 3-4 key people who are compulsory and others who are not: nice to have. If not available, ask these people to send their inputs before the meeting.
— The presence of the management in the meetings should not be mandatory. It is up to the staff to convince the management about the Innovation Labs

General recommendations :

— Innovation labs must remain productive with concrete results;
— Need for positioning for the definition of the next ODP;
— Establish the Innovation Lab dynamic on an ongoing basis to encourage initiatives when opportunities arise;
— Continue and it would be interesting to take stock of all the initiatives in the theme to :
  - Sharing information / Keeping up to date with what is happening on the theme (projects, events, monitoring, etc.)
  - Seeing the big picture

- Follow up on current and potential projects
- Identify new actions/projects