



**EMPOWERING EARLY CAREER PROFESSIONALS  
FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP OF AGRICULTURAL  
INSTITUTIONS**

**EXPERIENCES FROM A LEADERSHIP  
MENTORING PROJECT IN EASTERN & SOUTHERN AFRICA**



Cohort 1 project participants

# **EMPOWERING EARLY CAREER PROFESSIONALS FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP OF AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTIONS**

**EXPERIENCES FROM A LEADERSHIP MENTORING PROJECT  
IN EASTERN & SOUTHERN AFRICA**

© Institute for People, Innovations and Change in Organizations - Eastern Africa (PICO-EA)

Fair use of this publication for non-commercial purposes is encouraged, provided proper citation is made, subsequent to permission being granted by PICO-EA

### **Citation**

Otieno, D.J., Akinyi, B. and Rege, J.E.O. (2018). *Empowering Early Career Professionals for Effective Leadership of Agricultural Institutions: Experiences from a Leadership Mentoring Project in Eastern and Southern Africa*. Institute for People, Innovations and Change in Organizations - Eastern Africa (PICO-EA), Nairobi, Kenya.

April 2018, Institute for People, Innovations and Change in Organizations - Eastern Africa (PICO-EA)

ISBN: 978-9966-114-90-7

### **Edited by:**

Anne Wangalachi, Communications and Knowledge Management Consultant  
Anne Marie Nyamu, Editorial, Publishing and Training Consultant

### **Design and Layout:**

Felix Odonde, PICO-EA



# Contents

<i>Abbreviations and Acronyms</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>v</i>
<b>1. The Leadership Context in African Agricultural Institutions</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Important leadership gaps in the African agricultural landscape .....	1
1.2 Why leadership mentoring?.....	2
1.3 Leadership mentoring objectives and expected outcomes .....	4
<b>2. How the Leadership Mentoring was Achieved</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 The design process .....	6
2.2 Selection of mentees and mentors.....	8
2.3 Mentoring approach.....	10
<b>3. Unlocking a World of Career Possibilities for Mentees and Mentors</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1 A focus on goal-setting ensures achievement of development goals.....	16
3.2 Personal career transformations from the mentoring exposure .....	17
3.3 Mentees' personal stories of self transformations.....	19
3.4 Tracing overall benefits to individual mentors .....	24
3.5 Achieving changes at institutional level.....	30
<b>4. Lessons for the Future</b>	<b>37</b>
4.1 A structured approach that yields results .....	37
4.2 Mini - project: leadership in practice .....	37
4.3 Optimizing the length of mentoring project .....	38
4.4 Mentor–mentee pairing .....	38
4.5 Catalyzing institutional change .....	39
4.6 Paying it forward by mentoring others.....	39
4.7 Staying connected in between the formal training events .....	40
<b>List of Tables</b>	
Table 1: Criteria for selecting mentees and mentors .....	8
Table 2: Gender-disaggregation of mentees and mentors .....	9
Table 3: A sample of some of the mentees' achieved development goals .....	16
<b>List of Figures</b>	
Figure 1: The transformation pathway from mentoring to positive change .....	7
Figure 2: Components of change .....	11
<b>References</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1: List of mentees and mentors who participated in the project.....	42
Appendix 2: Participants' feedback on learning workshops' processes and content .....	46

# Abbreviations and Acronyms

ARD	Agricultural Research and Development
CCRP	Collaborative Crop Research Program
CoP	Community of Practice
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
KALRO	Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization
LWs	Learning Workshops
MOW	Mentoring Orientation Workshop
NaSARRI	National Semi Arid Resources Research Institute (Uganda)
NARO	National Agricultural Research Organization (Uganda)
NM-AIST	Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology (Tanzania)
PICO-EA	Institute for People, Innovations and Change in Organizations - Eastern Africa
R&D	Research and Development
SARI	Southern Agricultural Research Institute (Ethiopia)

# Preface

Many African economies are driven by agriculture, with contributions to gross domestic product (GDP) of up to 30%, on average. This underscores the need for sustained investments in agricultural research and development (ARD) and in the dissemination of new technologies to farmers. Towards this pursuit, enormous financial resources have been invested by public and private sector partners through grants to ARD institutions. Through its Collaborative Crop Research Program (CCRP), McKnight Foundation is contributing to this endeavor by investing in thematic research on priority crops in Eastern and Southern Africa. The CCRP funds collaborative research between smallholder farmers, leading local researchers, and development practitioners to explore solutions for sustainable, local food systems. Envisioning a world where all have access to nutritious food that is sustainably produced by local people, the CCRP works through collaborative agro-ecological systems research and knowledge sharing that seeks to strengthen the capacities of smallholder farmers, research institutes, and development organizations. The program takes a holistic, ecosystem approach to agriculture, supporting research and partnerships that, while seeking to improve crop productivity, pays attention to the environment, sustainability, improved livelihoods, and nutrition outcomes. Recognizing that leadership underpins the development of a functioning ARD system, the CCRP strategy (Theory of Change) includes investment in developing leadership competencies where the Program works.

The institutional landscape in African ARD is characterized by several leadership challenges. Professionals are promoted to leadership positions based on their technical credentials, including research undertaken and published. This is often not accompanied by targeted structured leadership or management training. The result is leaders who are ill-prepared to manage institutions and the available resources, especially the human capital.

Furthermore, in the last 15 years the leadership pipeline in sub-Saharan Africa has been drying up, with many institutions lacking a clear succession plan to replace the greying scientists and managers. Closely related to this is the lack of active mentorship by leaders in these institutions to prepare the next generation of professionals to succeed them. Rapid advances in agricultural technologies coupled with globalization calls for a generation of ARD leaders who combine strength in technical areas of agriculture with critical leadership skills—to build functioning teams and to effectively champion desired change—sometimes against tides of technological populism driven by agendas which may not be workable or sustainable in local contexts. All these factors point to the need to set up a process of preparing young scientists—the next generation leaders—to take up leadership positions, and to do it better than the current generation, and reflecting new contexts.

This is the context in which the Institute for People, Innovations and Change in Organizations in Eastern Africa (PICO-EA) partnered with the CCRP to design a four-year leadership mentoring program to build the capabilities of early career scientists in Eastern and Southern Africa—focusing on the countries in which the project has had a long-term engagement in crop research and development (R&D). The leadership mentoring project entailed identification of promising early career individuals (mentees) on one hand and experienced persons to mentor them on the other. Mentoring, which is a process of supporting individuals to realize their best potentials, was organized in two cohorts, from September 2014 to August 2018, with each going through a two-year learning cycle.

During the period of the project, we have observed changes amongst the mentees—and indeed the mentors—that have convinced us of the crucial need for this kind of initiative. About 60% of the mentees have embraced the learnings and are implementing them as part of their day-to-day work back at their institutions. This speaks to the potential of such a project or program. We have seen phenomenal transformation in some of the mentees. Their self-esteem and ability to influence others has increased. They have caused change at institutional and system levels and developed new models of collaboration within their institutions. Through activities carried out as part of the project, and lessons learned from project-driven processes, some of the mentees have increased their visibility, have been recognized and have assumed positions of seniority. Some mentees' journeys stand out and are highlighted in this publication. These stories confirm that the project contributed to the enhancement of both technical and soft skills—thus creating a more wholesome scientist and manager.

This publication is organized into four chapters. Chapter 1 sets the leadership context in African agricultural research institutions, with a focus on highlighting the need for leadership mentoring. Chapter 2 outlines the process through which the mentoring was done. The personal development of the mentors and mentees from project learning and exposure are covered in Chapter 3. Finally, lessons drawn from mentees' and mentors' evaluation of the project, and useful insights to institutions wishing to develop similar leadership mentoring programs, are highlighted in Chapter 4.

The book focuses on the experiences of this mentorship project being implemented in Eastern and Southern Africa aimed at empowering early career professionals for effective leadership of agricultural institutions. For institutions or projects supporting technology development, we are calling for the need to balance investment in the technical (or 'hard') skills versus the leadership and management (or 'soft') skills. Developing leadership skills impacts people's lives in major ways: it gets teams and institutions working by



facilitating people to get things done more effectively through functioning relationships and sustainable collaborations. It focuses on mindsets and people.

We thank all those who helped in one way or another in the execution of the project and in the preparation of this book. We acknowledge McKnight Foundation for providing financial support that made the project possible. We also acknowledge the leadership and regional teams of the Foundation for their insights in selecting the mentees and mentors; Maria Nassuna-Musoke (PICO-Uganda) for assisting in the preparation of training materials and significantly contributing to the design and delivery of the learning workshops; David Jakinda Otieno and Bethsheba Akinyi for supporting the mentees' and mentors' learning process throughout the project, and the preparation of materials required for putting together the draft versions of this book; Anne Wangalachi and her team for initial reviews and compiling the materials; Anne Marie Nyamu for the subsequent review; Betty Mwakalemu, Michael Ogambi and Robert Ouma for insights; and Felix Odonde for working on the design and layout of this book.



**Ed Rege**  
CEO and Chairman  
PICO-EA



# 1. The Leadership Context in African Agricultural Institutions

## 1.1 Important leadership gaps in the African agricultural landscape

According to the World Bank, Africa's agribusiness will be worth USD 1 trillion by 2030 (World Bank, 2013). On average, agriculture contributes at least 30% of GDP in many African countries (OECD/FAO, 2016). To sustain the critical role of agriculture in these economies there is need to generate more relevant scientific research solutions and support their deployment to farmers. This underscores the need to invest in agricultural research and development (ARD).

While progress has been and is being made on the technical front—development of technologies—the pace at which this is happening could increase significantly if institutions in the continent functioned better. The current suboptimal functionality of ARD institutions is attributed in large part to poor leadership. On this front, progress has been made in terms of research outputs and outcomes—for instance, scientific publications and new crop varieties. However, the efficiency and effectiveness of ARD process requires the so called soft skills; a critical component that has hitherto received limited attention in terms of investment for capacity building. Professionals are usually promoted to leadership positions based on their technical credentials, including research undertaken and published, with limited leadership or management training. Quite often, this results to leaders who are ill-prepared to manage institutions and the available resources, especially the human capital.

Closely related to this is the lack of active mentorship by leaders in these institutions to prepare the next generation of professionals to succeed them. The current generation of leaders are greying and retiring, with the leadership pipeline in African ARD institutions drying up. Many institutions lack a clear succession plan to replace the greying scientists and managers. Indeed, Babu et al. (2011) noted that there is lack of a deliberate framework and sustained efforts to build the leadership capacity of scientists in African ARD institutions that is necessary to lead Africa's agricultural transformation.

It is in this context that the Institute for People, Innovations and Change in Organizations - Eastern Africa (PICO-EA) in collaboration with the Collaborative Crop Research Program (CCRP) of McKnight Foundation designed a four-year leadership mentoring project whose goal was to



*“Generally, the training has improved my capacity to study problems, enhanced my analytical and judgmental ability, and enhanced my facilitation role in helping people to work well in teams.”*

*Kelvin Mtei, NM-AIST*

enhance leadership and managerial skills among early career scientists. The project was based in six CCRP countries in Eastern and Southern Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda; Malawi, Mozambique, and Tanzania) where the CCRP has had a long-term engagement in crop R&D.

The CCRP works through collaborative agro-ecological systems’ research and knowledge-sharing that seeks to strengthen the capacities of smallholder farmers, research institutes, and development organizations. The CCRP takes a holistic ecosystem approach to agriculture, supporting research and partnerships that, while seeking to improve crop productivity, pay attention to the environment, sustainability, improved livelihoods, and nutrition outcomes.

The CCRP has given significant attention to capacity development in technical areas through graduate fellowships, targeted specialized training and ongoing support of project teams to address critical gaps such as research methods and scientific writing skills. The leadership mentoring project speaks to the fact that rapid advances in agricultural technologies call for a generation of ARD leaders who combine strength in technical areas of agriculture with critical leadership skills. It is this combination that will allow the establishment of functioning teams and to effectively champion desired change, sometimes against tides of technological populism driven by agendas that may not be workable or sustainable in diverse local contexts. The mentorship project therefore entailed identification of promising early career individuals (mentees) on one hand and experienced persons to mentor them on the other. Mentoring was organized in two cohorts, from September 2014 to August 2018, with each going through a two-year learning cycle.

## 1.2 Why leadership mentoring?

Mentoring is a process of supporting individuals to identify their potentials and to continuously work towards fully achieving the best levels of their own potentials so that they can become the ‘best’ persons that they aspire to be in life. The rationale for building leadership capacity for individuals and institutions involved in ARD in Africa was premised on several



justifications. Investment in research system does not necessarily guarantee good research and useful outcomes and impacts. First and foremost, causing change requires more than just technical skills: it requires skills to lead, manage and influence others. Second, leadership mentoring has a critical place in modern science due to the emerging realization that leaders are not exclusively born but can also be trained, mentored and nurtured (Covey, 2004). Clearly, such mentorship is critical for early and mid-career researchers who are the future leaders and managers of research teams and organizations in Africa's ARD systems.

Supporting leadership mentoring within the CCRP was considered opportune because of the CCRP's unique orientation, which provides an ideal environment for leadership development. The CCRP has great potential for leadership mentoring: it has a good mix of junior and senior scientists from diverse disciplines. Furthermore, the CCRP uses the Community of Practice (CoP) approach whereby scientists working on similar themes in a region (Eastern, Southern and West Africa) meet annually to share findings and experiences from their research and, in-between the annual meetings, organize specific learning and sharing events to address identified needs. The CoP approach provides an ideal environment for nurturing targeted leadership development. There is opportunity to use the CoP as the nucleus for sustaining 'change momentum' through actions at various levels: regional—through the CoP annual sharing and learning forums, grantee-led processes, and topical workshops; national—through the convenings of CCRP project(s) and at project implementation level.





### 1.3 Leadership mentoring objectives and expected outcomes

This leadership mentoring project was expected to contribute to building capacity for transformative leaders in the following ways. First, a cadre of 'leadership-aware', facilitative, self-motivated and proactive next generation ARD professionals (in both biophysical and social sciences) able to drive positive change in their work environments and embrace proactive mentoring. Second, committed senior researchers who would purposely mentor younger persons in their institutions as a calling rather than an assigned role. Third, improved team and institutional leadership and management once mentees and mentors get into leadership positions. The mentorship was also expected to create a critical mass of next generation of institutional leaders who support 'leadership for change' and champion the change process needed for enhanced performance of ARD institutions.

The mentoring process was expected to be a win-win for both mentees and mentors. For the mentees, it was an opportunity to build their leadership skills for managing research and training initiatives and prepare them to be effective researchers, trainers and leaders in their respective professional areas and institutional settings. The interactions with other mentees, mentors and resource persons from different institutional cultures and professional backgrounds would expand their career networks, build confidence and also enhance their visibility as well as that of their institutions and programs. For mentors, by voluntarily committing their time and experience to support the learning and professional development of early career individuals, they would gain high-level recognition in professional networks while expanding their own networks.

## What mentorship delivers

### Mentor

- Gain high level recognition in professional networks from voluntarily committing time and experience to mentoring
- Expand own networks

### Mentees

- Build leadership skills for managing research
- Become effective researchers, trainers and leaders in respective professions
- Expand career networks
- Build confidence
- Enhance visibility of self and institutions/programs

## 2. How the Leadership Mentoring was Achieved

### 2.1 The design process

The project was designed to run for four years from September 2014 to August 2018 and was divided into two cohorts. Each cohort went through a two-year learning cycle. Learning sessions for the first cohort ran from January 2015 to May 2016, while the second cohort was implemented from April 2016 to October 2017. Early career researchers (mentees) in ARD were paired with senior level researchers (mentors), where possible with similar ARD interests and from the same country. The project countries were Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Mozambique, and Tanzania. A participatory inclusive process was applied in designing the leadership mentoring content, selection of mentees and mentors, and implementation of the learning activities. Consultations were held between the members of the project team at each stage of the mentoring process: PICO-EA, CCRP regional teams for Eastern Africa and Southern Africa, McKnight Foundation leadership, and the leadership of stakeholder institutions. The stakeholders were consulted to assist in identifying mentees and mentors; ensuring the information reaches potential applicants and encouraging them to apply; sharing their knowledge of the applicants to inform the selection process; and matching mentees with mentors based on their knowledge of the individuals—professional interests, personalities and work ethics.

The mentoring was envisaged to contribute to positive change in the individuals and their institutions through a logical sequence (see Figure 1).



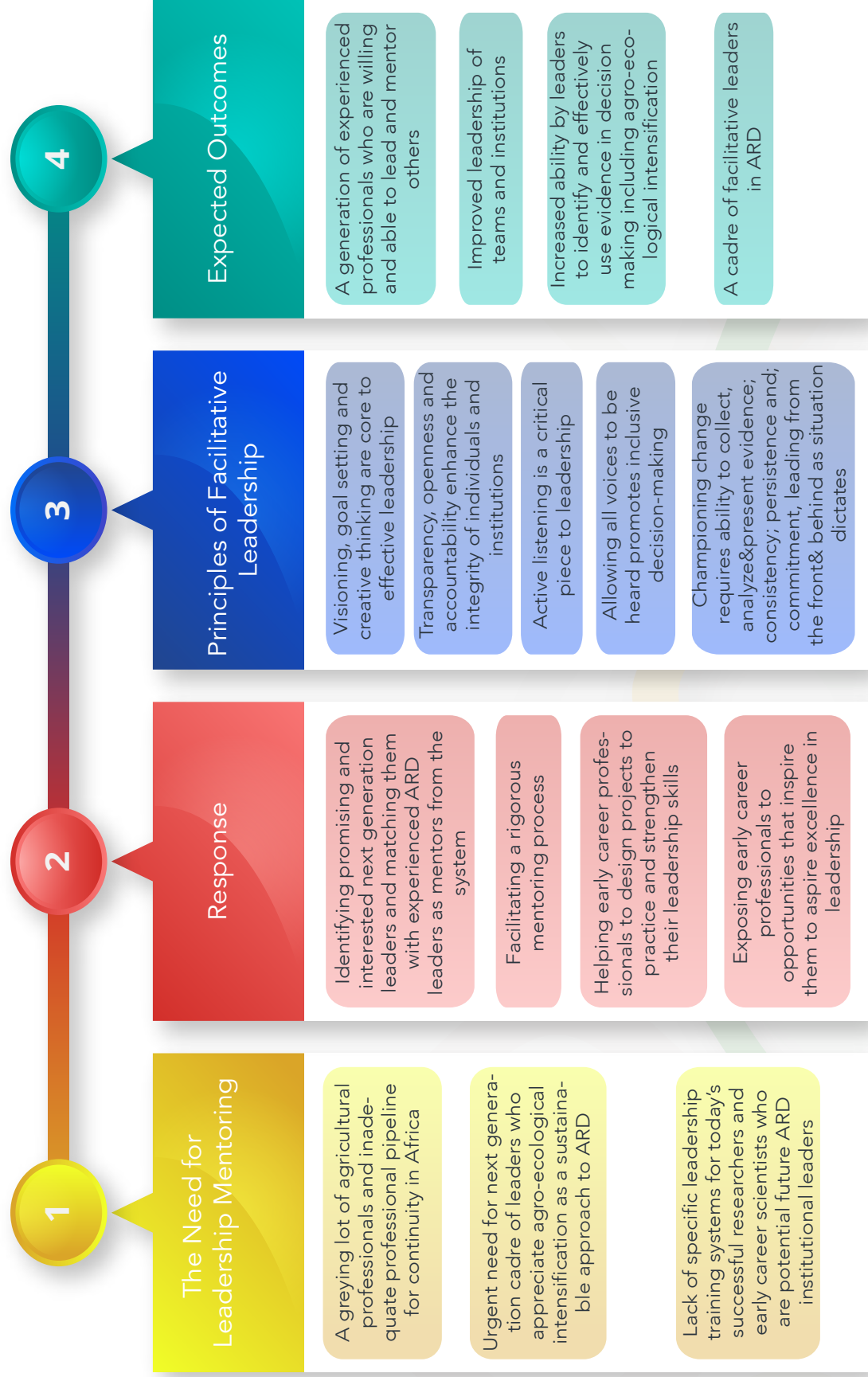


Figure 1: The transformation pathway from mentoring to positive change

## 2.2 Selection of mentees and mentors

Table 1 outlines the selection criteria used to recruit both mentees and mentors into the leadership mentoring project.

Table 1: Criteria for selecting mentees and mentors

<b>Mentee requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professionals in biophysical and/ or social sciences working in agriculture.</li> <li>• Currently pursuing or have completed at least master’s degree level of training.</li> <li>• Work in or are affiliated to national research systems and universities</li> <li>• Are current or former grantees, or partners of McKnight Foundation’s CCRP</li> <li>• Have a strong desire to learn new skills and are willing to embrace change in personal and institutional leadership management approaches for overall success</li> <li>• Preferably below 40 years, but not over 45 years of age</li> <li>• Equal consideration to male and female candidates</li> <li>• Graduate students in CCRP projects were particularly encouraged to apply</li> </ul>
<b>Mentor requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accomplished professionals in biophysical or social sciences working in agriculture who have:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• completed at least master’s degree level of training</li> <li>• good understanding of the key values of McKnight Foundation’s CCRP</li> <li>• strong desire to mentor early career individuals</li> <li>• high level of integrity</li> <li>• a reputation in promoting facilitative learning</li> <li>• ability to stimulate creative thinking</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Enjoy networking with early career individuals in professional groups</li> <li>• Promote positive feedback for learning and change management</li> <li>• Are keen to help others become better individuals in their careers and personal lives</li> <li>• Are passionate about improving the institutional landscape of Africa’s agricultural R&amp;D</li> <li>• Are willing and ready to contribute their time for the good of others and of Africa</li> </ul>

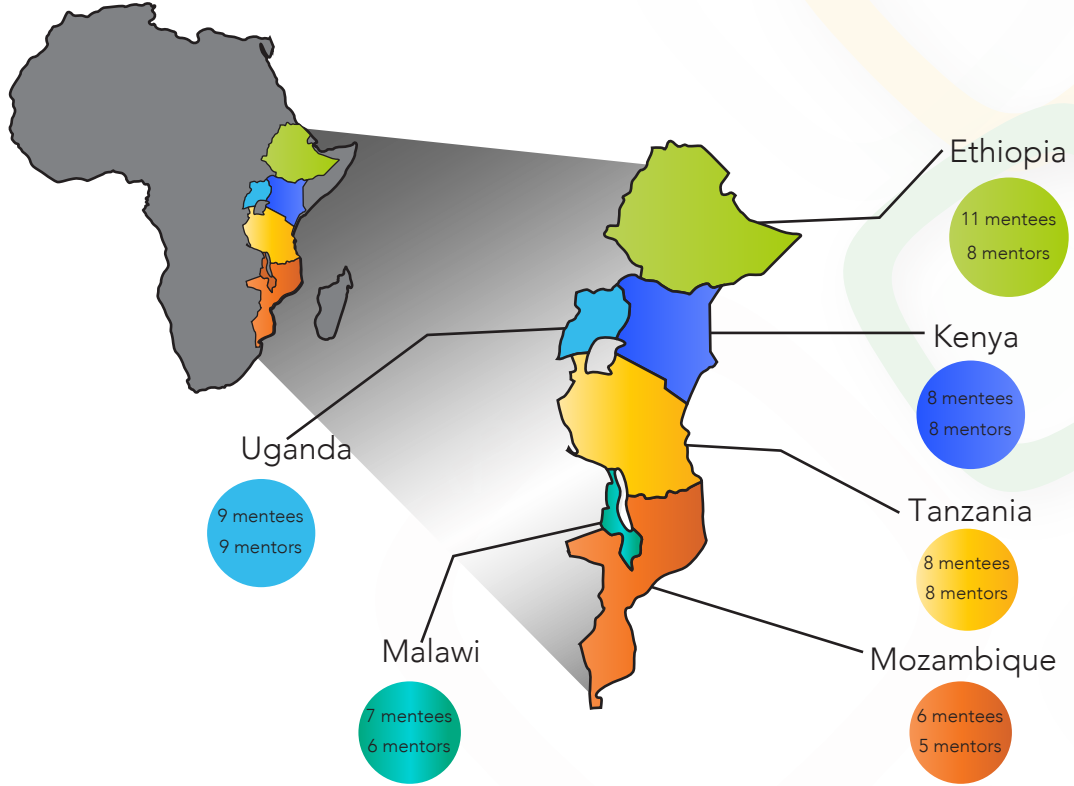
A total of 49 mentees and 44 mentors were selected (Table 2). The full list of the mentees and mentors can be found in Appendix 1.

Table 2: Gender disaggregation of mentees and mentors

Country	Cohort 1				Cohort 2			
	Mentees		Mentors		Mentees		Mentors	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Kenya	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Uganda	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2
Ethiopia	3	2	3	1	4	2	4	0
Malawi	3	0	2	0	4	0	3	1
Mozambique	2	1	2	0	2	1	2	1
Tanzania	2	2	2	1	1	3	4	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>7</b>

	Kenya	Uganda	Ethiopia	Malawi	Mozambique	Tanzania
Mentees	8	9	11	7	6	8
Mentors	8	9	8	6	5	8



## 2.3 Mentoring approach

The project used interconnected and complementary processes to introduce and bolster facilitative leadership concepts through diverse activities that included three learning workshops (LWs), supplemented by ongoing mentoring, and the execution of a leadership mini-project in the mentees' home institutions. The mentoring was conducted either through face-to-face or technology-mediated sessions. Mentees were also supported to participate in professional events (not limited to conferences) to observe their mentors in action. Details on the LWs are highlighted in Box 1, while the mini-projects and career development goals are in Box 2.

### Box 1: Learning workshops

The LWs were face-to-face sessions in which mentees, mentors and resource persons met at one location. The workshops were designed to share leadership concepts and to deepen awareness on leadership effectiveness at three successive levels: individual, institution and system. The resulting change at these levels is shown in figure 2. Three LWs (LW1, LW2 and LW3) were held for each cohort and they focused on the following topics:

- *LW1*: introduction to leadership and management; mentoring orientation workshop (MOW)—mentoring concepts, mentor—mentee roles, dos and don'ts; facilitative leadership; influencing change (Carnegie, 2012); communication—listening, feedback culture, feedback styles, how to receive and give feedback; emotional intelligence; personality types; win-win strategies; conflict management strategies; and leadership values—integrity, honesty and respect.
- *LW2*: sharing experiences from application of LW1 topics; systems thinking; visioning and goal setting; deepening self-understanding—behavior types; team work and partnership; motivation and leadership; managing human dynamics—situational performance management; and managing upwards.
- *LW3*: deepening understanding of some critical topics—suggested by mentees and mentors at LW2; the level five leadership; sharing experiences and challenges from the field; mentee-mentor reflections on progress and lessons for the future; and keeping the mentorship candle burning.

The LWs were held at intervals of 3 months; with each lasting between 3 to 5 days. Though the main form of content delivery was through presentations by the resource persons, learning also took place through role plays, experience-sharing, buzz group discussions, and paired mentee-mentor discussions





Figure 2: Components of change

A participatory learner-focused evaluation process was adopted to assess different aspects of the mentorship. In the LWs, process and tool tracking teams (PTTTs) were formed with voluntary members composed of a diverse mix of mentees and mentors in terms of institutional affiliation, country and gender. Each day's workshop PTTT was tasked with observing and reporting on dynamics in the workshops; methods used by the resource persons and their effectiveness in delivering the training content; participants' level of engagement; and areas for improvement in the subsequent meeting days. At the end of each LW, participants were asked to evaluate the entire workshop in terms of: what they liked most, what could be improved, and the key learnings they acquired from the LW.

In addition, at the end of LW3, participants were asked to evaluate the entire learning cycle and anonymously indicate: the most significant learning that they felt they had gained from the project, what could have been done differently, attributes that they liked or disliked most about their mentee/mentor; and whether they would recommend the course to others—pointing out the specific reasons why they would recommend the course to other people. The feedback obtained from evaluations helped to inform adjustments in aspects of project implementation and the design and content of the subsequent LWs (e.g., in the selection of which topics to deepen further). Details on participants’ feedback on the topics covered in the LWs as well as the learning process can be found in Appendix 2.



### 2.3.1 Enhancing ongoing mentoring and experience sharing

To enhance the learning and practice of leadership skills and ensure continuity of the mentoring in between the LWs, the mentee-mentor pairs were expected to hold regular face-to-face and virtual meetings to discuss the mentee's progress and share insights on the mentoring. The mentee-mentor pairs also shared information among themselves and with others on emerging opportunities such as workshops, conferences, scholarships, and other relevant professional matters through regular communication on email, phone, Skype and WhatsApp chats.

#### **Box 2: Leadership mini-projects and career development goals**

Mentees, their mentors and the project team worked jointly to identify and design the practical aspects of the project: the mini-project. These were diverse in nature, but with one goal—to help the mentees solve an identified institutional or ARD system challenge by applying the leadership approaches, insights and tools obtained through the leadership project. In each case, a mentee started the mini-project design by consulting his/her colleagues in their teams/institutions to identify a real challenge that required leadership and/or management skills to solve. The mentee was then guided by the mentor and project team on how to apply some of the tools acquired from the leadership project to solve the identified challenge while working jointly with their colleagues—the ultimate aim being co-creation of solutions. A sample of the mini-projects across the two cohorts focused on: embracing feedback culture in institutions; sharing research methods; promoting knowledge sharing in institutions; improving leadership in institutions; sharing skills on geographic information systems (GIS); women empowerment; and harmonizing of university curriculum. Considering that change is a gradual process, mentees initiated their mini-projects during the two-year mentoring period for each cohort and continued to implement them thereafter in order to achieve the desired changes.

Development goals are individual targets that a mentee hopes to achieve in his/her career. As part of the mentoring process, each mentee was asked to reflect on their personal careers and think of the kind of professional growth they hoped to achieve in the medium term (5–10 years) and in the long term (20 years and beyond). Mentors worked together with mentees to identify career expectations and goal-setting to achieve these career aspirations.

This process was preceded by a session during the LWs where both mentees and mentors were taken through some key principles of goal-setting and how to stay focused in order to achieve desired goals. Each mentee identified one major career goal describing what they wanted to achieve in the long term. For instance, some mentees had aspirations of 'becoming leaders/heads of their institutions—for example, being a director of a research organization'. To support the achievement of the main goal, the mentees identified two to three specific development goals that they would start working on during the two-year mentoring period and continue to pursue beyond the mentoring project duration towards their ultimate journey of achieving their overall career goals in the long run. For instance, a mentee who expected to become a director in a research organization in the next 20 years had to think of the real steps needed to reach that high level career goal, including acquiring higher education, publishing papers, and working in some middle-level positions before ascending to the top. At the beginning of the project, each mentee drafted their career goals, in a mentorship agreement that they signed jointly with their mentor. Through quarterly progress reporting, the project team was able to assess the advancement of the mentee towards their career goals—in terms of success achieved and challenges encountered—and how the obstacles were being managed.

#### *Tracking implementation of development goals and mini-projects*

To track implementation of the development goals and mini-projects, by mentee-mentor pairs, a template with monitoring indicators was developed. Each mentee-mentor pair was required to discuss and record progress made on a monthly and quarterly basis. The monitoring process captured three main activities: mentee-mentor meetings and communication; individual development goals; and mini-projects. Each pair was asked to indicate the type of mentoring sessions held and what was achieved. The progress reports indicated that, on average, each pair held three face-to-face meetings per month, two calls (either phone or Skype), and used email for ongoing mentoring, identification and implementation of the mentee development goals and mini-projects. The quarterly evaluation also captured a mentee's career progression in different aspects, as per their development goals. More than half of the mentees reported success in their mini - projects; with some being encouraged by their teams and institutions to scale up their ideas beyond one Department/Unit to the rest of the institution. As a result, the mentees continued with the mini-projects when their cohort ended.

An end of project reflections meeting was held, and was attended by a sample of mentees and mentors from cohorts 1 & 2 and invited participants from various stakeholder institutions. The meeting was held to: reflect on the experiences of the mentees and mentors; consolidate lessons learned; and share insights with and learn from other stakeholders involved in designing and implementing similar programs in Africa.





### 3. Unlocking a World of Career Possibilities for Mentees and Mentors

Participants in this leadership mentoring project achieved benefits at individual level—whether mentor or mentee. But also, through their mini-projects, mentees were able to cause change to happen at institutional levels. It was pleasantly surprising and fulfilling to learn that mentors too, gained new knowledge and skills from the project, and by applying these achieved more at work. The stories that follow showcase accomplishments by select mentees and mentors.

#### 3.1 A focus on goal-setting ensures achievement of development goals

At the beginning of the project, the mentees outlined several development goals that included both professional and personal milestones. Their milestones included: advancing their academic qualifications, being promoted at work, publishing their research in peer-reviewed journals and gaining visibility within professional circles. About two-thirds of the mentees confirmed that they achieved their goals, thanks to the effective goal-setting and time management skills they gained through the project (Table 3).

Table 3: A sample of some of the mentee's achieved development goals

Focus of development goal	Mentees' accomplishments
Widening visibility and networking	Enhancing professional networks and gaining news on professional events, conferences, calls for proposals and training opportunities
Proposal writing	Writing grant-winning proposals
Publications	Developing scientific papers that were published in leading peer-reviewed journals
Further academic training	Gaining motivation and planning skills that led to completion of master's degrees
	Applying for and gaining admission into funded PhD programs



### 3.2 Personal career transformations from the mentoring exposure

Project participants revealed that they considered the training and mentorship as transformative. It contributed to unlocking their potential and creating a new world of career possibilities, thanks to the new knowledge and expanded networks. How exactly did this come about?

- **Mindset change:** mentees who were previously held back by inertia were inspired by the energy and stories of their peers to pursue their own career aspirations which included advancing their professional training or research.
- **Expanded networks:** participating mentees and mentors provided a new network for each other and connected each other to their other non-project networks. The net effect was increased access to information and resources on calls for grants and scholarship opportunities.





- **Ability to set priorities:** once mentees realized how a lack of prioritizing kept them from achieving their goals, they adopted the approaches shared and saw dramatic improvements in their productivity.
- **Effective planning and time management:** many mentees confirmed that they were not intentional in planning ahead or deliberate in managing time before the course. Once they applied the principles learned though, they were able to complete research projects and master's courses, for instance.
- **Strengthened personal development:** from having an increased self-awareness and a better understanding of different personalities, mentees have enhanced their confidence, negotiation skills and emotional intelligence. This helped them pursue their goals more effectively

Some inspiring experiences of selected mentees and mentors are documented in Boxes 3 to 11.



### 3.3 Mentees' personal stories of self transformations

Across the project, most of the mentees confirmed that their personal and professional growth as a result of the leadership mentoring resulted in their being more recognized as technical experts, ascending to leadership positions and advancing professionally.

#### Box 3: Bright star—overcoming inertia and shyness to achieve career goals



Clara Mollay is a Human Nutrition and Rural Development Specialist. She works in the Department of Food Biotechnology and Nutritional Sciences (FBNS) at Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology (NM-AIST) in Tanzania. For many young professionals, academic institutions can be daunting working environments. For a self-confessed 'shy person' like Clara, they can be doubly so. Surrounded by senior team members with credentials and experiences superior to their own, these young professionals often feel intimidated and shy away from making meaningful contributions.

Against this backdrop, her achievements since joining the project are nothing short of outstanding. For her mini-project, Clara took on the task of establishing quarterly departmental meetings in her department. Since its inception, the department had not provided a recognized forum to facilitate the flow of information among its members. The proposed departmental meetings would be particularly useful for generating formal documentation and fostering a team spirit among departmental staff.

With this in mind, Clara set about securing the support of key personnel, including the Head of Department, the Dean, and the acting Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academics, Research and Innovation. This she achieved through a combination of face-to-face discussions and official letters to the concerned persons. Her efforts were rewarded with two departmental meetings held as planned in 2017. She commented on this: "Members appreciated the

*"Before I joined the leadership project I was very reluctant to engage with people. In a meeting, I would prefer to be by myself and would not initiate a conversation."*

meetings and agreed that the same should be continued in the future. So, impressed was the acting Deputy Vice Chancellor that he proposed the initiation of similar meetings in all NM-AIS departments." Based on her experience, Clara shared this lesson: "The management is ready to support implementation of ideas and activities, even when they come from junior staff, provided they are convinced that such ideas will bring positive change to the institution." By implementing her mini-project, she has benefited professionally and academically. She admitted that there has been a marked improvement in her communication skills and self-confidence. This initiative also increased her visibility within the Department and in the entire institution. Most importantly, a robust spirit of team work and cooperation has been embraced by staff members.

Previously, Clara had postponed her application for PhD studies several times, believing as she did that these opportunities and pursuits were for other professionals. In the LW1, she evaluated herself and saw there were things she needed to do, like setting goals and effecting plans for achieving them, something she had never done before. Clara's concluding words reveal just how much she has grown from her participation in the project. To top it all off, she has also published a paper.

*"Now I am no longer shy and I have expanded my networks. I am currently a PhD candidate, and about to be promoted to the position of a lecturer. I am grateful for the goal-setting focus: I have attained 99% of my goals!"*

#### **Box 4: Reigniting team work and recognition at work**



Beatrice Sadina is a Social Scientist, currently working on field crops at the National Semi Arid Resources Research Institute (NaSARRI), of Uganda's National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO). Before taking part in the project, Beatrice was a shy member of a dynamic team, who had difficulty expressing herself and engaging effectively with senior colleagues. Her mini-project was geared towards promoting teamwork at the Institute — no mean feat for someone naturally shy

*“Because of my mini-project we now have a monthly corporate breakfast and an annual staff dinner.*

*Implementing my project helped me learn how to engage senior personnel more efficiently.”*

and timid. She settled on this idea because she wanted to create social gatherings in which team members could share updates by program—activities, challenges, and new developments—to increase collaboration and visibility. These changes have also been felt at the institutional level, where there has been a marked improvement in the sharing of research information at NaSARRI during the monthly corporate breakfast. “Teamwork has also been enhanced through the annual staff dinners where outstanding staff is recognized. These in turn are acting as role models for the rest of the staff,” she concluded. Her

successes have not come about without challenges. She faced resistance from other program leaders when she was introducing biweekly meetings. To overcome this, she used negotiation skills to influence top management to embrace the idea and positioned the initiative as a win-win for the Institute’s Director, and all staff members—a strategy that worked.

Beatrice used the lessons from emotional intelligence to manage her emotions in dealing with her team of technicians, who she worked closely with to set up and manage field experiments. Before the project, she would get very upset when the technicians forgot some of the equipment or did not consult her on the requirements before setting off to the research sites. As a result, her crops were always planted late due to the high demand for the technicians’ time, vehicles and other resources. This would upset her further, and results from her research plots would be dismal. Today, thanks to the improved consultation and feedback mechanisms learned, and the resulting teamwork she has empowered the technicians to gain more ownership of the outcomes of the trials. Recently, her Institute’s Director commended the state of her finger millet crop which was thriving, as a result of being planted on time.

### Box 5: On becoming a sought after professional



With a Master of Environmental Human Ecology degree, Eunice Onyango works as a Social Scientist in the Socio-economic and Policy Development department at the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO). Before attending the mentoring, Eunice observed that she had low confidence and lacked professional visibility. Not surprisingly, her main obstacle was convincing external and internal stakeholders that she could deliver on promises made.

This, in addition to an inability to write winning proposals, and you have a notably discouraging scenario. It was on her quest for excellence that Eunice stumbled upon her mini-project.

Seminars that offered an excellent forum to present findings, ideas and success stories by scientists and other staff had ceased at KALRO. No concrete reason for this could be identified. Noting this, Eunice volunteered as her mini-project to assist in the revival of the seminars. She took on the additional challenge of participating in the presentations. Made visible through this effort today, Eunice sits on various committees, leads projects and takes on proposals with aplomb; a far cry from her former self.

Eunice gave her project a fighting chance by planning its execution carefully. She began by securing the support of the Institute's director, and seeking the views of her fellow scientists and other team members. Buoyed by their positive response she proceeded to organize the seminars with great success. Feedback received from the seminars' evaluation indicated that the move to revive the seminars had been a timely one. Information shared in the seminars has seen an improvement in KALRO's performance.

Eunice's eyes widen in wonder when she talks about the transformation she has witnessed in herself, her organization and her colleagues' perception of her. She still has difficulty taking it all in. Today she is more confident and her expertise shines

***"The result was very noticeable, I became more visible to my colleagues and networked with other mentees and researchers."***



through in meetings. She is now a sought-after workshop organizer and facilitator, and has so far successfully organized two seminars. The first, at KALRO and was intended to share lessons on 'feedback culture' which she had learnt from the leadership mentoring project, and was titled: 'Feedback that brings positive change'. Nearly 30 scientists and departmental heads participated.

Using the proposal writing skills she learned in the leadership mentoring project, she wrote a winning application to attend a three-week course on 'Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact of Food and Security Programs' at the Centre for Development and Innovation at Wageningen University, The Netherlands. Eunice believes the people skills she gained are not only applicable to ARD, but to all spheres of life in general. It is evident that the project set her firmly on her path to becoming a global expert in agricultural knowledge and technology dissemination systems—a long-term dream of hers.



### **Box 6: Working well with farmers**

Eunice Onyango and Noel Makete, two mentees from Kenya, accepted a challenge from a colleague to train farmer groups, something they had not done before. Thanks to the social skills and confidence gained through the project, the two were able to convince the prospective 'client' that they could do the task and they effectively delivered the training. Previously, the two lacked self-confidence, were not visible at work, and did not consider their communications skills as effective. After accepting the challenge and equipped with the skills and material from the project, Eunice and Noel organized a training session on 'Group Leadership, Governance and Agribusiness Management' for 46 farmer-group representatives from two sub-counties in western Kenya. After the training session, the feedback provided by the participants (all farmers) was extremely positive. Today, the two have been contracted as part-time consultants by non-governmental organizations in that part of the country.

### **3.4 Tracing overall benefits to individual mentors**

An added benefit to mentors participating in the project, beyond inspiring next generation ARD leaders, was acquiring new skills such as facilitation, managing mentoring relationships, and effective networking. With the peer network developed through the project, they were able to advance their careers through collaborative research projects. Mentors also enhanced their ability to deal with both senior and junior colleagues, leading to smoother work relationships.

### **Box 7: When listening to farmers enhances technology uptake**

At the KALRO Kibos station in Kenya, John Ojiem—the Centre Director—works with farmers' groups, where he implements research and development programs. The success of his mission depends on his clients' satisfaction with products and services provided. John served as a mentor in cohort 1 of the leadership project, an experience he describes as transformational.



A common misconception is that farmers are generally uneducated, unexposed and therefore incapable of effectively embracing advanced technology. Unfortunately, they have subsequently been excluded during the development of technologies. This has contributed to tension between researchers—wishing to deploy new technologies and approaches—and farmers who do not fully see the need to abandon their current technologies and approaches in favor of the new ones. Being aware of this tension, John strives to ensure that it does not have a negative impact on his work. It was in this state of vigilance that he noticed that a farmers' group working on value addition of legumes was not performing well. According to him, "They appeared to lack cohesion, and this had the potential of throwing project activities in disarray."

John understood one fundamental truth: farmers just want to be heard; and so he listened. "The facilitation and conflict management knowledge I acquired from the leadership mentoring project enabled me to listen keenly to group members, and to hear what was not being said. I was able to help bring out the real issues for discussion, which led to an amicable solution being found," he said. At a personal level, John credits the project for enhancing his personal growth and professional networks.

### **Box 8: When the teacher becomes the student**

Lexa Matasyoh from University of Eldoret, Kenya, was a mentor in cohort 2. Her life was impacted as a result of participating in the leadership project and this is continuing in her professional life. Being a university lecturer, Lexa spends her time imparting knowledge to the next generation of researchers and academicians. It is natural for her students to assume that she knows everything as they approach her with their myriad questions. When Lexa was approached to participate in the leadership mentoring project she did not expect to learn as much as she did—about herself, professional networking and more effective modes of teaching.

*"I now find it much easier to meet new people and my network is growing."*



One would expect that a lecturer at a university is confident and easily able to network at the social and professional level. For Lexa, this was not the case. However, all this has changed and her social and professional networks have expanded. Her new networks include fellow mentors she met during the various cohort 2 learning activities which have consequently fostered research collaborations. Her ability to meet new people and form relationships has

improved greatly.

Today, Lexa has innovated in how she delivers training content to her students. It is now more collaborative and facilitative—tools she learned during the project. “I am now enjoying a facilitation kind of teaching where I give my students topics to research on and present in class. This way, the whole class learns more and learning becomes interesting as opposed to one person teaching for two hours.”

Lexa appreciates that the skills covered in the course have the potential to indeed go beyond agricultural research.

Since going through the mentorship project, she appreciates the significance of developing leadership skills and being willing to embrace change. This, she says, is vital to continuously practicing the gained skills on a day-to-day basis.

### **Box 9: A mentor for life**

Although Elly Kafiriti’s training in formal mentorship came late in life, he nonetheless appreciates its significance in enhancing work relationships and forming younger professionals. A retired scientist, Elly is currently working as an independent consultant at Ilunde Agrovvet and Research Solutions Company Ltd. He is also an external examiner at several local universities and a mentor in the leadership mentoring project. In this role, he reviews students’ theses at master’s and PhD levels.

Elly appreciates the value of receiving a hand up when one is advancing their career.





When he was asked to be a mentor, he had no idea that the process would be quite as formal, organized and focused as it was. His only experience with mentorship in the past involved overseeing junior staff members at his place of work. Undoubtedly, he finds this new approach quite refreshing and useful. Thanks to the lessons from the project, he can now review his students' work and share constructive feedback, without inadvertently intimidating them as was the case before.

His face lights up when asked about the area of his life that has experienced the most growth. While not discounting the growth he has experienced on a personal level and in his career, Elly is most excited about the social and professional networks he was able to develop. Through these networks he is more aware about international opportunities, and has gained information useful to his work. He also appreciates the time-management and emotional intelligence skills he learned in the project that have helped him to improve all round: at work and at home.

Elly is also taking the learnings on facilitative and inclusive leadership to the farm. He currently manages a rice intensification project for a client, and a private cashew nut farm. In both set ups he engages in fruitful conversations with the small-holder farmers to get their views and to encourage uptake of the right production approaches.

"I wish that I could have had this (McKnight Foundation) mentorship experience when I was younger in my career. It is something that I wish all young researchers could have access to. It makes all the difference!" he concludes.

***"If you have gone up to PhD level it means you had people helping you along the way. It is important to give back"***



### Box 10: Benefits reported by other mentors

**Bernard Kamanga** from University of Livingstonia, Malawi, shared his personal reflections on how he applied the leadership skills of self-understanding and visioning to transform his own child to a better person. At work, he reported that the skills enabled him to change his working style to encourage others amidst their weaknesses and promoted team work. As a result, his visibility increased and has now been appointed to many university committees. He wished that such structured mentorship had come during his early education stage.

**Elias Zerfu** from Ethiopia observed that the leadership mentoring project is timely due to limited focus on such aspects by NARSs and CGIAR centers. He noted that by applying patience and emotional intelligence skills, he managed to support his mentee to institutionalize the mini-project.

**Florence Kiyimba** from NARO, Uganda, noted that she 'taught' (coached and mentored) and learnt in the process. She taught the mentee (Juliet Tibagonzeka) to walk her purpose road map by sharing her (Florence's) own experiences and provided information and encouragement. She learned listening skills, feedback hints, patience and how to develop professional relationships.



*"In learning you will teach and in teaching you will learn."*

*"We learn more by sharing our mistakes and failures with others."*



"Although I have attended several leadership management workshops in the past, this particular mentorship project enabled me to consolidate the learnings and gain a better understanding of how to apply the leadership skills and concepts in the work place. I also learnt how to better interact with both junior and senior colleagues well. Patience and flexibility are essential in understanding and supporting others," says Yasinta Muzanila of Agricultural Research Institute, Naliendeke, Tanzania.

Michael Masanza of Uganda Christian University says: "...I am personally in a leadership position and the differences between a leader and a manager that I learned in this project brought out aspects that I need to observe and apply in my every day running of business in my institution, especially as I mentor others. It was an excellent opportunity."



"My experience as a mentor made me more reflective, confident and understanding in addressing issues with my mentee as well as those I work with at the University."

*Teresa Akenga,  
Vice Chancellor,  
University of Eldoret, Kenya.*



"The mentorship project exposed me to a more structured approach to nurturing young people. The interactions enabled a two-way approach to sharing knowledge and skills between the young and the old."

*Samuel Gudu  
Rongo University, Kenya*

### 3.5 Achieving changes at institutional level

Through this leadership mentoring project, the McKnight Foundation and PICO-EA expect to cause long-term institutional level changes in three main ways. Mentors and mentees graduating from the project will form stronger teams, through facilitative leadership. By executing the mini-project and applying other leadership skills, both mentees and mentors will convince senior management at their institutions of the value of the new approach to leadership and management. Combined, all these efforts will lead to enhanced R&D performance in the participating ARD institutions. The early results from the project show promise for institutional change, as demonstrated in the stories in Boxes 12 to 14.

#### **Box 11: Using soft skills to innovatively change university curricula**

Without missing a beat, Inacio Cipriano from Mozambique identifies 'rapport' as the leadership skill that has had the most impact in his work. He credits the application of this skill with his new-found capacity to understand the motivation and ability of his target audience, enabling him to better serve their needs.

Inacio graduated from Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) in Malawi with a degree in Rural Development and Extension. At present, he is a lecturer at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique. His mini-project was borne out of concerns raised by both the university and students. At the Eduardo Mondlane University, there was a worrisome trend of undergraduate students being unable to



***“Applying the negotiation skills learnt during the mentoring project, I was able to convince senior managers at my university to understand the need to review BSc degree programs...”***

complete their studies within the stipulated four years. Even the most promising of students encountered the same challenge.

Inspired by the learnings from the mentorship project and with fire in his belly, Inacio set out to unravel this mystery. It did not take him long. To anyone seeking to know how he managed it, Inacio has his answer ready: rapport. Having seen the fruits of the masterful application of this deceptively innocuous concept, Inacio speaks of rapport almost reverently. He is quick to extend his appreciation to the mentorship project.

His investigations revealed a glaring mismatch between the curriculum, course content and length of programs. Existing regulations did not help matters, serving to further degrade the university’s efficiency and students’ performance. Calling on his trusty rapport, Inacio approached the Dean with both the problem and proposed solution. Feeding off of the dean’s growing enthusiasm, he outlined the strategy he would use to close the gaps identified. So enthused was the Dean that he brought other senior members of staff on board.

As luck would have it, the university was in the process of revising its curriculum. Inacio’s mini-project was given the green light. Unlike other mentees, Inacio is yet to measure the full impact of his project, because implementation is ongoing. However, he is already reaping the benefits of his participation in the leadership project; for example, the college-wide visibility of his mini-project has helped expand his social and professional networks in and outside the college. Through these networks, he has interacted with other stakeholders involved in the revision of curricula, gleaning invaluable information. He was appointed as part of the team responsible for developing mechanisms for ensuring that students complete their studies within the stipulated duration.

Inacio’s increased visibility has made him a familiar face to high ranking officials. His incorporation into the subcommittee charged with reviewing the curriculum is proof that his contributions have not gone unnoticed.



## Box 12: Taking up the mantle in leadership



"Since joining the project, I have developed self-initiative which has seen me take advantage of opportunities. This has enabled me to win a grant; publish a paper; attend training and organize sessions to present findings to smallholder farmers. In addition, I have been appointed to sit in a peer review committee and managed to get part-time lecturer jobs at two universities."

These are the words of Bernard Mukoye, a pathologist working at the Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology in Kenya. At the time of joining the leadership mentoring project he was struggling with lack of visibility and operational space within the organization. He had innovations that he wished to try out, but the prevailing status quo made it difficult to cut through institutional bureaucracy.

Bernard's mini-project was aimed at enhancing the frequency and quality of seminars in his host department - Biological Sciences. During the project period, he successfully organized 12 seminars, during which departmental staff, postgraduate students and invited guests presented their research progress. Through his efforts to influence the frequency and quality of seminars, he learned that successful seminars are self-initiated and demand-driven: where colleagues and students use the seminars as opportunity to share their work with others. Another valuable lesson was that frequent seminars enhance confidence and improve quality of students' and staff research.

As an unintended result of the mini-project, Bernard has now received increased autonomy, visibility and his leadership potential has been recognized by his superiors, much to his delight. "My visibility in the University has increased; I am being assigned more responsibilities. I have also been frequently invited by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (in charge of Planning, Research and Innovation) to present seminars on time management. Recently, I was appointed to a peer review committee, and I was also chosen to address university students during the annual career week"

## Box 13: A snapshot of other emerging institutional level changes

### 1. Visible changes associated with mini-projects

**Joseph Kalasa**, a mentee from Livingstonia University in Malawi, undertook to create a culture of providing and receiving feedback among faculty members at his university, as he believed this would improve working relations and create opportunities for collaboration. He achieved his goal and through this initiative, he helped to create synergies and a feedback culture within the institution.

Through the leadership mentoring training, he gained a new appreciation of being proactive, and used

this momentum to successfully apply for a two-week course for agricultural specialists in Kazakhstan, funded by the United Nations Development Programme.



**Philipo Mashamba** set out to promote use of a Breeding Management System (BMS) tool in crop breeding at Naliendele Agricultural Research Institute, Tanzania. Reflecting on the experience, he happily notes that the



students and researchers whom he trained on BMS are able to effectively use it in their research projects.

**Juliet Tibagonzeka's** mini-project focused on 'Building private–public partnerships for nutrition and health improvement in Uganda'.



She is proud that this has enabled her to successfully register a non-governmental organization that produces 'Nutrich porridge' for infants and that she was able to partner with a public health center to train mothers on better nutrition for children under 5 years old.

**Mercy Onyango** introduced a leadership seminar series for student leaders of professional associations in the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. Her greatest happiness from this, she reported, is that the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture has included the series, which aims to

reduce conflicts between students and university management, in the official performance targets of the recently established university mentorship program.



**Neema Kassim** was concerned about the laxity in responsiveness to calls for research proposals by some of her colleagues at NM-IST in Tanzania. Her mini-project focused on persuading her peers to form proposal writing teams so they could share skills and write

collaborative proposals and peer review each other's work. She expressed her excitement that her team was able to write two grant collaborative proposals that won grants; an achievement that greatly improved the Institute's visibility in research



## 2. Extending the soft skills to benefit others in the working environment

**Daniel Nyambok, a cohort 1 mentee from Kenya:** He is mentoring two junior team members; and organizing training events for 18 leaders from 5 non-governmental organizations to transfer leadership skills.



**Boniface Alkamoi, mentee from University of Eldoret in Kenya:** He is communicating more innovatively during his lectures to about 500 students by applying communications skills learned during the project.



His lectures are now more engaging, stimulating, and participatory. The institution has responded positively as seen from improved end of lecture evaluations and student feedback.

**Hector Malaidza from Malawi Department of Agriculture Research** noted that his increased visibility led to him being given an internship opportunity to teach at Texas A&M in the USA for a semester. In addition, the skills of managing upwards and in difficult situations enabled him to be incorporated in many projects.







CONTE... POSITIVE

TRANSITION STATE

Accept Adversity  
for change to happen  
Be conscious with change process  
Don't ignore opinions  
Communicate  
Keep your mind  
Discipline  
Don't Sabotage  
Remain focused

Edy Kefeni  
Tanzania

Bring Emotions  
Don't ignore  
New ideas  
NOT TO  
Focus on  
Don't ignore  
The opponents  
Don't be  
Don't change  
Focus

## 4. Lessons for the Future

During the execution of this leadership mentoring project, several early lessons have emerged that provide insights for designing similar projects. These lessons touch on the approach, the mentor-mentee pairing, duration of formal mentorship, the mini-project, and the start of cultural changes at the mentees' institutions based on new leadership behaviors. These demonstrate that the project is achieving twin goals vital to creating stronger ARD systems in Africa. Thus, the project has strengthened the technical and soft skills of the mentees. The available evidence has shown that the mentees have become: technically stronger, more visible and respected, better networked, and more confident in their ability to design and deliver effective solutions for the needs of their clients including smallholder. These lessons are explored in a bit more detail below.

### 4.1 A structured approach that yields results

The formal structure of the mentoring processes, supplemented by complementary and interconnected training events, work well in keeping both the mentees and mentors focused on the mentees' career goals. Through the LWs, mentees increase their awareness of leadership skills and concepts—each subsequent LW reinforcing lessons from the previous one; and learn from their peers' experiences in putting the training into practice. Mentors, too, appreciate the formal orientation to mentoring—which for some is the first they had received in their lives and careers. The rich content of reference material provided in simplified, easy to understand language and formats contribute to making the mentoring systematic. This approach cements the learning, whose results are evident to the mentees' peers and seniors, thus creating a new appreciation for formal leadership mentoring.

### 4.2 Mini-projects: leadership in practice

Through the mini-projects, mentees work with their mentors and institutional management to collectively identify leadership challenges in their teams and co-create feasible solutions. The mini-projects expose the mentees to the practical side of leadership and management, testing their resourcefulness, creativity, resilience and ability to productively engage their teams, including managing upwards. Though in some cases, there is initial resistance from top





management and senior professionals in some institutions, mentees use their influencing skills effectively and engage them on the importance, value and potential of the mini-project. As a result of successfully executed mini-projects, mentees gain trust and visibility which lead to increased responsibility. Institutional benefits range from streamlined systems of working curricula, the beginning of formal feedback forums such as seminars and improved work relations which led to increased institutional effectiveness.

### 4.3 Optimizing the length of mentoring project

On the whole, the two-year duration of the formal leadership training for each cohort was judged as adequate by most mentees and mentors. For the overall mentoring relationship, though, consensus among the mentors and mentees is that it should run for three to five years to ensure that the momentum gained is maintained, and the mentees secure the confidence they require to catalyze change at individual, institutional and system levels. For instance, changing a policy at institutional level requires more time and advocacy, which go beyond the two years of the project.

### 4.4 Mentor–mentee pairing

Pairing mentees with mentors in the same field and locality increases the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship, through enhanced face-to-face meetings complemented by common institutional context shared knowledge, experiences, and networks. Male-female pairing of mentors introduces diversity, enriches the experience and deepens knowledge on challenges experienced by young male and female ARD professionals. Where the mentor–mentee pairs work far apart, poor Internet connectivity affects quality of Skype calls and overall effectiveness of the mentoring calls.



the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship, through enhanced face-to-face meetings complemented by common institutional context shared knowledge, experiences, and networks. Male-female pairing of mentors introduces diversity, enriches the experience and deepens knowledge on challenges experienced by young male and female ARD professionals. Where the mentor–mentee pairs work far apart, poor Internet connectivity affects quality of Skype calls and overall effectiveness of the mentoring calls.

## 4.5 Catalyzing institutional change

The project involved both senior and early career ARD professionals, in varying positions of leadership in their respective institutions. The leadership and management skills gained in the project are versatile and transferrable to diverse set-ups, contributing to the project's uniqueness and impact. Further, thanks to the visible and tangible transformation in these leaders, there is emerging increased respect, collaboration and feedback for continuous improvement. Their peers, staff and students see increased empathy, innovation, effectiveness, focus on goals, and the desire to effect organizational change. All this is contributing to increased operational effectiveness of ARD institutions, which will in turn lead to better ARD outputs from these institutions for instance, from: better managed research trials, greater collaboration on research projects and better engagement with farmers. Some mentees are leveraging their professional networking skills, expanded networks and grant writing skills to bring into their institutions much-needed funds from new sources. A case in point: a mentee developed a proposal that led to the award of a €200,000 grant for a North–South collaborative research project.

## 4.6 Paying it forward by mentoring others

The leadership mentoring project is pivotal in the careers of the young ARD scientists. They became involved in the project at a critical juncture, when some needed both guidance and motivation to take a new direction towards their career goals. Through the leadership knowledge and skills they gain, coupled with the friendship and guidance provided by a committed mentor, these professionals overcome personal limitations and go on to achieve extraordinary feats. They are keen to pay it forward by mentoring others. Several have taken one or two mentees under their wings, while others have encouraged the establishment of a mentoring culture within their institutions and networks.

*"Farmers respond to new technologies and innovations favorably when and if they are involved in their (technologies) development. They need guidance to implement these technologies and innovations and not instructions. I believe the skills covered in this course have the potential to facilitate this."*

*Elly kafiriti, Ilunde Agrovet and Research Solutions Company Limited*





#### 4.7 Staying connected in between the formal training events

Today's technological advancements offer immense opportunity for the mentees and mentors from each cohort to stay connected in between the formal LWs, and after the end of the project. WhatsApp groups and email lists are being actively used by the project alumni and to share updated leadership and management e-resources, and to post opportunities on funding rounds, upcoming conferences, and calls for proposals for competitive research grants. The project leadership is taking advantage of these platforms to keep the alumni informed of any new opportunities. This will maintain the fire and sense of camaraderie from the project.

## References

Babu, S.C., Annor-Frempong, I. and Asenso-Okyere, K. (2011). *Enhancing Capacity for African Agricultural Research: Selected Models and Lessons*. Conference Working Paper 18 prepared for the ASTI/IFPRI–FARA Conference, December 5–7, Accra, Ghana.

Carnegie, D. (2012). *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Vermilion, London, UK. pp. 275.

Covey, S. (2004). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*. Simon & Schuster Limited, London, UK. pp. 372.

OECD/FAO (2016). *Agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa: Prospects and challenges for the next decade, in OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2016-2025*. OECD Publishing, Paris. Retrieved from doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/agr\\_outlook-2016-5-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/agr_outlook-2016-5-en)

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: List of mentees and mentors who participated in the project

#### Summary of Cohort 1 mentee–mentor pairs

Country	Mentees		Mentors	
	Name	Institution	Name	Institution
Kenya	Daniel Nyambok	Agriculture Improvement Support Services (AGRISS)	John Ojiem Okeyo	Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization, Kisumu
	Noel Makete Nekesa	Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization, Kakamega	Teresa Akenga	University of Eldoret
	Eunice Onyango	Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization, Kakamega	Beatrice Were	University of Eldoret
	Bonface Alkamoi	University of Eldoret	Hassan Were	Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology
Uganda	John Bosco Muhumiza	Mbarara Zonal Agricultural Research & Development Institute	Michael Masanza	Uganda Christian University
	Charles Liri	Regional Agricultural Research Institute	Beatrice Akello	National Agricultural Research Organization
	Juliet Tibagonzeka	Makerere University	Florence Kiyimba	National Agricultural Research Organization
	Stella Namaazi	National Semi-Arid Resources Research Institute (NaSARRI)	William Tinzaara	Bioversity International
Ethiopia	Berhanu Amsalu	Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research	Kebebew Assefaw	Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research
	Milkiyas Yasin Ahmed	Jimma University	Genene Mekonnen	South Agriculture Research Institution
	FekreMariam Mihertie	National Crops Resource Research Institute	Sarah Tewolde	Mekelle University
	Bezawit Yilma	Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR)	Kebebew Assefa	Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research
	Sarah Tewolde	Mekelle University	Elias Zerfu	International Food Policy Research Institute
Malawi	Justus Chintu	Department of Agriculture Chitedze Research Station	Vernon Kabambe	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Malawi	Joseph Kalasa	University of Livingston	Vernon Kabambe	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources
	Hector Malaidza	Department of Agriculture Research	Wilson Makumba	Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation
Mozambique	Miguel Magalhaes	Agriculture Research Institute of Mozambique (IIAM)	Manuel Amane	Agriculture Research Institute of Mozambique (IIAM)
	Celestine Jochua	Agriculture Research Institute of Mozambique (IIAM)	Manuel Amane	Agriculture Research Institute of Mozambique (IIAM)
	Inacio Cipriano	Edwardo Mondlane University	Ed Rege	PICO-EA
Tanzania	Philipo Mashamba	Agricultural Research Institute, Naliende	Omari Mponda	Naliende Agricultural Research Institute
	Kissa Mwaisoba	Agricultural Research Institute, Uyole, Mbeya	Yasinta Muzanila	Sokoine University of Agriculture
	Neema Kassim	Nelson Mandela Institution of Science and Technology	Yasinta Muzanila	Sokoine University of Agriculture
	Kelvin Mtei	Nelson Mandela Institution of Science and Technology	Patrick Ndakidemi	Nelson Mandela Institution of Science and Technology

### Summary of Cohort 2 mentee–mentor pairs

Country	Mentees		Mentors	
	Name	Institution	Name	Institution
Ethiopia	Wogayehu Melesse	South Agricultural Research Institute	Agdew Bekele	Southern Agricultural research institute
	Abebe Worku	Adet Agricultural Research Center	Tilaye Deneke	Amhara Agricultural Research Institute (ARARI)
	Sadik Muzemil	Southern Agricultural Research Institute	Kefelegn Getahun	Jimma University
	Bedru Beshir	Melkassa Agricultural Research Center	Elias Zerfu	International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
	Mastawesha Engdaw	Jimma University, College of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine	Kefelegn Getahun	Jimma University
	Bezawit Yilma	Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research	Elias Zerfu	International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
Kenya	Evans Ouma	University of Eldoret	Lexa Matasyoh	University of Eldoret
	Joyce Mutai	Kenya Agricultural Livestock & Research Organization (KALRO)	Samuel Gudu	Rongo University College,



Kenya	Benard Mukoye	Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology	Francis Muyekho	Masinde Muliro University Of Science And Technology, Department Of Biological Sciences (MMUST)
	Mercy Onyango	University of Nairobi	Stella Makokha	Kenya Agricultural Livestock & Research Organization (KALRO)
Uganda	Robert Amayo	National Semi-Arid Resources Research Institute (NaSARRI)	Herbert Talwana	Makerere University
	Beatrice Sadina	National Semi Arid Resources Research institute (NaSARRI)	Yona Baguma	Makerere University Department of Agricultural Production
	Benard Yada	National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI)	Margaret Kabahenda	Makerere University
	Sophie Nansereko	School Of Food Technology, Nutrition And Bio-Engineering, Makerere University	Charles Muyanja	Makerere University Department of Food Technology and Nutrition
	Shiphar Mulumba	Makerere University	Gorrettie Ssemakula	National Crops Resources Research Institute
Malawi	Limson Kaluzi	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources	Candida Nakhumwa	Farmers Union of Malawi
	Rumbani Moyo	University of Livingstonia	Bernard Kamanga	University of Livingstonia
	James Wasili	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) Bunda College Campus	James Bokosi	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources
	Kondwani Makoko	Department of Agricultural Research Services	Davies Ng'ong'ola	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources
Tanzania	Happy Daudi	Naliendele Agricultural Research Institute (NARI)	Elly Kafiriti	Ilunde Agrovet and Research Solutions
	Clara Mollay	The Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology	Neema Kassim	The Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology
	Ernest Mbega	Nelson Mandela African Institute of Science and Technology	Abel Gervas	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology, Arusha Centre

Tanzania	Frank Reuben	Sokoine University of Agriculture	Ernest Mbega	Nelson Mandela African Institute of Science and Technology
	Nuru Kipato	Sokoine University of Agriculture	Estomih Massawe	University of Dar es Salaam
Mozambique	Samuel Camilo	Agriculture Research Institute of Mozambique (IIAM)	Magalhaes Miguel	Mozambique Research Institute of Agriculture (IIAM)
	Justino Hilario	University of Eduardo Mondlane (ESUDER)	Amade Muitia	Mozambique Research Institute of Agriculture (IIAM)
	Angela Manjichi	Instituto Superior Politécnico de Manica	Zelia Menete	University of Eduardo Mondlane (ESUDER) & FDC

## Appendix 2: Participants' feedback on learning workshops' processes and content

### Cohort 1 participants' feedback on learning workshops' processes and content

Learning Workshop	What was liked most	What could be improved	Key learning from the workshop
LW 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory learning and interactions</li> <li>• Relevance of leadership</li> <li>• Good facilitation/ training approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shorten time for some sessions and more time for others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving feedback at the right time and style</li> <li>• Mentoring is a process</li> </ul>
LW 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory and interactive</li> <li>• Excellent facilitation/ training approach</li> <li>• Transparent mentor-mentee interactions</li> <li>• Small number of trainees</li> <li>• Workshop process and content</li> <li>• Great mode of presentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More time needed to cover content</li> <li>• More time for relaxing and interacting with other participants</li> <li>• Provision for further reading materials</li> <li>• Venue of workshop</li> <li>• Arrival logistics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-categorization of personality by the Dominance, Inspiring, Cautious and Supportive (DISC) model of human behaviour</li> <li>• Situational performance management model</li> <li>• Leadership skills</li> <li>• The 10 time management tips</li> </ul>
LW 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitation/training process</li> <li>• Different learning approaches</li> <li>• High level of interaction between participants and facilitators</li> <li>• Sharing experiences</li> <li>• Overall learning content</li> <li>• Time keeping</li> <li>• Venue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving mentor-mentee time to know each other</li> <li>• Integrity topic could be done with examples/case studies</li> <li>• Reduce topics in LW1 and LW2</li> <li>• Provide sessions for mentees and mentors separately</li> <li>• Ensure that mentees and mentors are from the same institution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership skills</li> <li>• Feedback cycle</li> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Managing upwards</li> <li>• Goal setting</li> <li>• To strive to influence others to be better people</li> <li>• Emotional Intelligence</li> </ul>

## Cohort 2 participants' feedback on learning workshops' processes and content

Learning Workshop	What was liked most	What could be improved	Key learning from the workshop
LW 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal-setting lessons</li> <li>• Conducive learning environment</li> <li>• Training content</li> <li>• Concept of leadership and development</li> <li>• Leadership as a life skill</li> <li>• Participatory and interactive sessions</li> <li>• Facilitation strategy and the group dynamics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time for site-seeing and networking</li> <li>• Increase time for discussion</li> <li>• Importance of networking/how to lead and how to reach goals</li> <li>• Training time to be a full week to avoid rushing</li> <li>• Facilitator to get time with mentees alone and mentors alone for some topics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application of Emotional Intelligence concept</li> <li>• Importance of networking skills for career development</li> <li>• Importance of having a clear career path</li> <li>• Change is good</li> <li>• The need to work diligently</li> <li>• How to improve on communication skills</li> <li>• Importance of giving feedback</li> <li>• Importance of soft skills (currently ignored by scientists)</li> </ul>
LW 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updates on mentee development goals and mini-projects</li> <li>• Systems thinking and visioning</li> <li>• Goal-setting</li> <li>• Deepening self-understanding</li> <li>• Motivation</li> <li>• Delegation</li> <li>• Empowering others and building relationships</li> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Situational performance management</li> <li>• Managing upwards</li> <li>• Dynamics of group decision making</li> <li>• Partnership development and management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocate more time for some topics</li> <li>• Conducive accommodation</li> <li>• Participants should communicate their challenges earlier</li> <li>• We need constant reminders on values</li> <li>• Framework to show relations between topics and LWs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influencing change</li> <li>• Mentor–mentee relationships</li> <li>• Systems thinking</li> </ul>







COHORT 2 Project Participants





# PICO-Eastern Africa

*helping institutions work...*

**Institute for People, Innovations and Change in Organizations - Eastern Africa (PICO-EA)**

**Suite 1 Spring Court**

**Watermark Business Park**

**PO Box 1450 -00502**

**Ndege Road, Karen**

**Nairobi, Kenya.**

**Tel: +254 (0) 20 2091162**

**Cell: +254 (0) 717 541222**

**Email: [info@picoteamea.org](mailto:info@picoteamea.org)**

**Website: [www.pico-ea.org](http://www.pico-ea.org)**

ISBN 978-9966-114-90-7



9 789966 114907