

CGIAR SCIENCE COUNCIL

June 1, 2009

Monitoring and Evaluation in the new CGIAR

This Paper has been prepared by the Science Council (SC) as an input to planning the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) functions that will be required in the new CGIAR. This paper focuses on the essential components of M&E for enforcing accountability, and does not elaborate on the processes of the different M&E related activities such as the need to facilitate feed-back and learning for improving performance at different levels in the System. Given the current transition, the paper purposely contains a somewhat speculative interpretation of research planning and implementation to highlight issues of potential importance for the System's future M&E.

The paper considers the different levels of operation in the new CGIAR where accountability for results and good performance are established and monitoring and evaluation is needed irrespective of whether the M&E is conducted through internal processes (within the Consortium) or external processes. Thus, the paper intends to present a System's perspective. The paper is organised considering the level in the System at which M&E activities are envisioned (e.g. at Mega-Program, Center, or cross-Center level) rather than by type of M&E instrument.

Introduction

The Integrated Reform Proposal¹ concluded that the CGIAR currently has a “complex overlay of reporting and funding relationships which lead to heavy oversight and at times micro-management by funders, yet without commensurate *de facto* accountability for results from the CGIAR Centers, and frustration on both sides”. The new structure proposed for the CGIAR is intended to enforce clearer lines of accountability than previously. Such clarity requires that expected performance can be monitored and that there are mechanisms for enforcing the accountability. Clear and purposeful M&E activities *per se* enhance accountability.

The new CGIAR research agenda will be guided by a Strategy and Results Framework (SRF) that will be implemented through a limited number of MPs conducted by multiple Centers and partners. The key elements or “points of accountability” in the new CGIAR that have M&E implications are presented in Figure 1 and include:

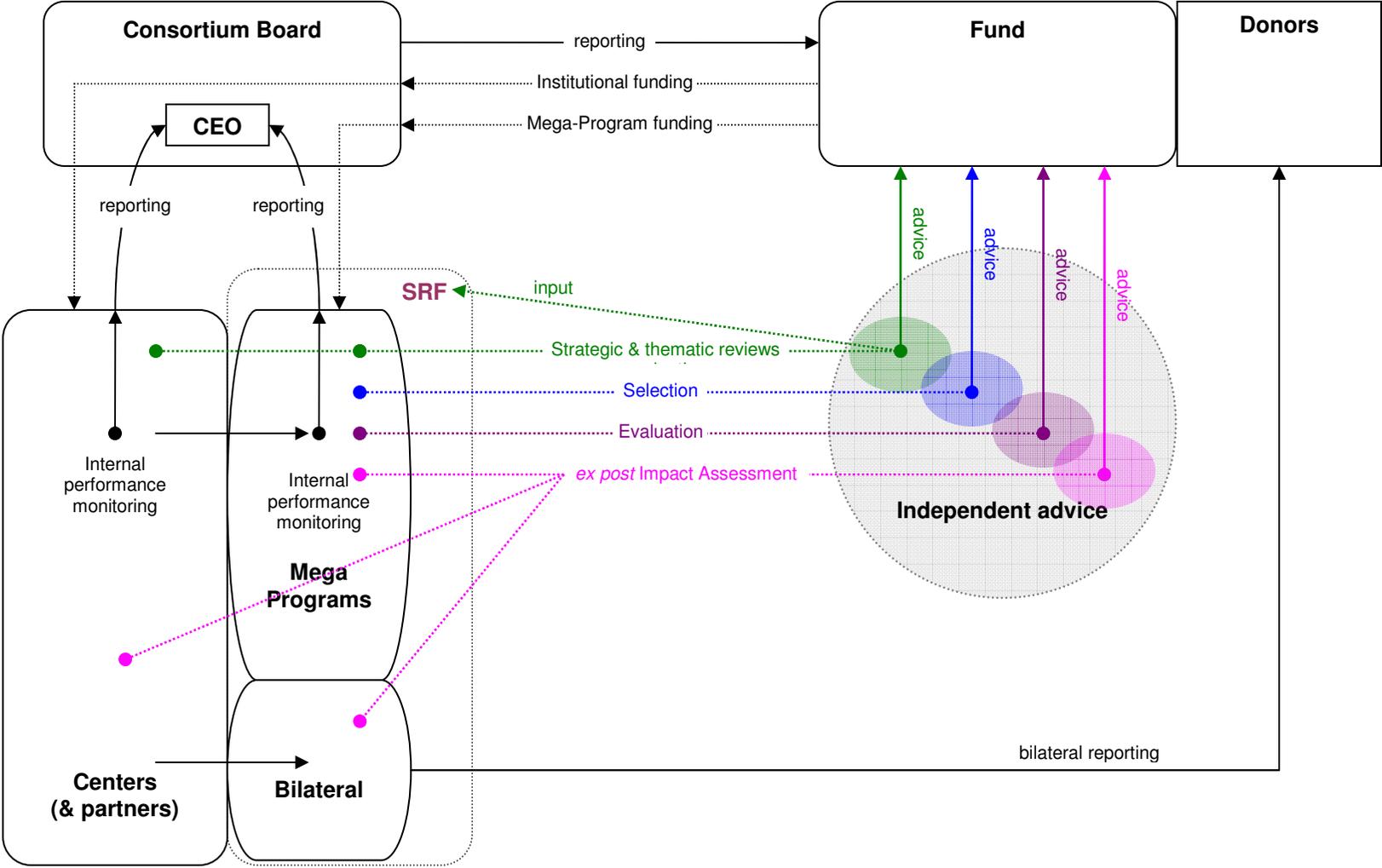
1. The accountability of the Consortium to the Fund Council through Performance Contracts that apply to Mega-Programs (MP). The M&E includes selection, performance monitoring and periodic evaluation of MPs.
2. The accountability of Centers to the Consortium (for their contribution to MPs) through Center Performance Agreements. The M&E includes performance monitoring.
3. Performance of individual Centers in overall financial, institutional and research management (including quality). The M&E includes performance monitoring, periodic Center evaluation, evaluation of a component of activities through thematic and strategic reviews and impact evaluation.
4. The accountability of Centers to bilateral donors for project/program performance (the size of the bilateral component may be significant). The M&E, other than activities mentioned above, may include audits and periodic reporting.
5. Performance across the System on specific areas of activity. Accountability is at Center, MP and Consortium level and the M&E includes strategic and thematic reviews.
6. The System’s performance. M&E includes periodic System review.
7. Longer term impact. The M&E includes *ex post* impact assessments.

At the end of each section, there is a list of activities that an independent scientific advisory body could conduct and lessons from SC past experience that could be of use.

A general principle should be that for all M&E applying to research and operations funded from the Fund under the Fund Council’s discretion (of MPs and institutes), the M&E information comes through common processes agreed by the System (see section 4, p. 11).

¹ A Revitalized CGIAR – A New Way Forward: the Integrated Reform proposal. The Change Steering Team. November 3, 2008.

Figure 1. Points of accountability and corresponding M&E activities in the new CGIAR



Monitoring and Evaluation at different levels of the System

1 Mega-program performance

Operationalizing CGIAR research through MPs involves the steps listed below (and that would need to be iterated as a necessary response to the changing and evolving development challenges). The M&E aspects are discussed in the following sections.

- design of the Strategy and Results Framework (SRF)
- choice of MP themes and the MP portfolio aligned with the SRF
- ex ante evaluation and selection MP proposals following agreed criteria
- monitoring and evaluation of progress and results
- strategic evaluation and ex ante assessments of opportunities
- revision of SRF and new program design
- selection of new MPs or MP components

Selection of the MP portfolio

The initial MP portfolio and new MPs will be proposed by the Consortium following development and approval of the SRF, with which the MPs need to align.²

The degree to which *ex ante* evidence-based priority setting³ can inform the development of the first MP complement depends on the time and resources available to be committed to such a definition. Consensus decisions are also required on the extent to which the MPs (i) are strongly based on the Centers' current competencies and orientation, or (ii) represent a re-aggregation and considerable re-emphasis or de-emphasis of certain research, or (iii) incorporate completely new areas of activities. Programs are to be output-oriented and therefore, in any of these cases, defining a minimum resource base necessary for generating outputs that can realistically lead to the projected developmental impacts will be important, including for judging whether a theme is suitable for a MP. Initially the MP portfolio is likely to include a large part of the CGIAR's current, so called "heartland" research. The Strategy Team is likely to go as far as identifying the global thematic, global commodity and regional features of the MPs. The team foresees that short "briefing" notes would be needed describing the proposed MPs to allow assessment of their potential against the broad criteria drafted by the Team.

To ensure investor concurrence with the proposed set of Programs, the Fund Council will approve the MP themes proposed (as concept notes) by the Consortium and confirm the MP portfolio.

² The generic characteristics for MPs are being described by the "Strategy Team" as part of the task of designing the SRF. The broad topics of the MPs must be the most relevant for contributing to the three broad Strategic Objectives (SO: food for people, environment for people and policies for people) established by the CGIAR. Following its analysis the Strategy Team will also derive a portfolio of Mega Programs for a first 6-year phase in a longer term context. The SRF is expected to undergo subsequent periodic revision and this will introduce additional new activities or alignments.

³ A three pronged approach is used by the Strategy Team: drawing from models, broad consultation and frontline researchers' views.

While selection of the portfolio of MP topics may be derived through system-level consensus among Consortium, Fund Council and stakeholders, it seems evident that an in-depth assessment of the merits of any individual program proposal for eventual funding would need to be carried out independently from the development of the detailed proposals. It is likely that the Fund Council will request independent scientific advice for approving both the proposed MP themes and the detailed MP proposals. The selection process therefore would be a two stage process involving the evaluation of concept notes (for general direction) and full proposals so that the relevance and quality of science and partnership mechanisms can be reviewed.

Ex ante assessment of MP proposals

The fully elaborated MP proposals are approved by the Fund Council on advice from an independent scientific advisory body (likely the ISPC), which conducts the *ex ante* assessment of the MPs drawing on relevant external expertise – i.e. providing a synthetic system view of suitability based on the advice of peer scientists and development experts. Proposals will vary depending upon the extent to which they repackage existing research or introduce new areas of research or new organization of research partnerships. Within a MP, justification may be needed for choice of focus areas (with the associated minimum resource proposal) and the *ex ante* assessment needs to review and validate those choices.

The full MP proposal will need to go into much more detail than in the short concept notes. It must include the identification and prioritization of constraints at different levels within the topic, range and type of partnerships, research methods, degree of risk, and detailed delivery plans etc. The *ex ante* assessment of these proposals will use both the broader set of criteria, determined at the SRF level, and case-specific criteria that depend on the nature of the program. It is appropriate that the MP selection criteria both reflect and influence the criteria and indicators by which the MPs will be monitored for progress and achievement. Some of the criteria may be uniform for all MPs (those determined at the SRF and MP portfolio development stage; for example relevance to SOs or CGIAR comparative advantage) while others may be specific to the individual MP (depending on the complement of different components). MPs are likely to have many different components being undertaken or delivering on different time horizons and scales and thus inherently including different expectations of tangible results and risk⁴. This requires that the assessment and monitoring criteria are sufficiently tailored to each program.

Some MPs are likely to be very long-term, e.g., those related to productivity enhancement through crops research. However, irrespective of duration—long or not—all MPs will have to define short term (3-5 year phases) objectives and focus areas. For example, the wheat fungal disease Ug99 may be one short term focus area in a program that as one component includes productivity increases through wheat breeding, and within this broader theme durable resistance to pests and pathogens. In an MP there may be several hierarchical levels of foci with varying degree of inter-disciplinary research and sub-components of different nature (competitive, high risk, highly participatory, proof of concept etc). The need for initial selection may be followed by the need for approval of Phase 2, Phase 3 etc. The anticipated complexity of a particular MP has implications for its M&E and selection criteria.

⁴ A MP hierarchical structure could involve multiple levels; for example: Level 1 - crop breeding (continuous horizon); Level 2 - specific crops (20-30 year horizon); Level 3 - complex traits (such as drought tolerance; durable resistance); regional breeding strategies (10-15 year horizon); Level 4 - targets in individual traits, research to resolve specific problem, such as Ug99, capacity, networks (3-5 year horizon)

In the future it is likely that components of MPs will be revised and re-considered, but also that entirely new MPs are constituted while some originally more short term MPs are terminated following explicit exit strategies. *Ex ante* review and assessment will be required for new and revised MP components and for wholly new MPs for securing investor and stakeholder confidence in the portfolio as it develops.

Monitoring

The SRF may lay down the general scope and character of the “Results” which are expected from the MP portfolio. These may be revised in connection with the anticipated 6-yearly revision of the SRF. The SRF may also propose the general means for evaluating results and monitoring progress across MPs against broader developmental, scientific and programmatic criteria. The SRF is unlikely to describe the details of the Performance Contract which is likely to be MP-specific.

The **Performance Contracts** lay out the criteria by which progress and success of programs (in terms of research achievements, their uptake by users and short-term outcomes) are monitored. The contracts should cover a fixed period which most logically would be the planning period (or phase) with distinct objectives and may role with the period of committed funding (as discussed later). Many MPs are likely to have significant components that re-package or build on existing research—the results of which will continue to be recorded and the outcomes monitored. MPs are also likely to have completely new areas of research that require new partnerships and formulation of initial research hypothesis. Progress in developing new elements needs to be monitored in the initial years. In other words, the design of performance contracts should reflect the cycle and maturity of the program components. There will be a need to address components that may be a mixture of continuing research against time-bound objectives and new research and partnerships with exploratory needs.

Recognising the difference between the desirable and the measurable, risk and delivery are important considerations in the design of the appropriate indicators for performance. Although the results indicators at the SRF level may be defined in terms of developmental impact, the research performance contracts need to be focused on what can realistically be monitored about a research operation that does not lead to immediate impacts. The contracts should reflect the level of performance where the Centers and Center/partner research teams contributing to MPs are held accountable (outputs) and the level of performance where MP implementors are responsible for results through reasonable embedding—the required facilitation, capacity building, partner choice etc. and active impact pathway monitoring (outcomes). Longer term impacts are more realistically monitored at the System level even if it were the Centers’ and MPs’ responsibility to collect baseline data and the Centers’ responsibility to document achievement of impact (discussed later).

Depending on the upstream-downstream and global-local balances and the area of the research activity, the monitoring criteria may need to include capacity building, empowerment, and gender targets on one hand, and appreciation of incremental research advances and evidence of plausibility on the other hand. Space should be left for serendipity and for rewarding unforeseen outcomes.

The current Performance Measurement System (PMS) implemented annually by all Centres—but not Challenge Programs (CP)—consists of institutional indicators that, with the exception of financial indicators, do not seem relevant for MPs (discussed later for applicability to Centers)

and a small set of research-related indicators.⁵ Although it was envisioned in the Integrated Reform Proposal that the PMS would try to capture Center performance in contributing to MPs (as defined in Center Performance Agreements), it seems more advantageous to develop a comprehensive M&E for the MPs rather than implement the MP performance monitoring at the Center level.

Thus MP performance (in terms of establishment and partnerships, incremental and quantifiable advances in research, outputs, outcomes) should be governed in contract specifications and measured at the MP level. Monitoring and evaluation related to Performance Contract may be implemented using specific indicators collected at agreed intervals (through self-reporting and verification or through peer-review, as is currently done with the outcome indicator, where the Fund Council would need to engage external expert advice) or periodic external evaluations (discussed below). Of the current uniform PMS indicators, the financial indicators would seem appropriate and adaptable for annual monitoring and the outcome indicator seems the most suitable for developing as a standard MP success indicator.

Use of monitoring information

Funding in the new CGIAR is expected to be for a longer term and to be of a more secure nature than currently. The results of monitoring and periodic external reviews (discussed in the next section) will inform MP funding decisions, most usefully for each phase of an MP to which the objectives also apply. It would seem counterproductive for the Fund Council to adjust funding for an MP annually on the basis of annual performance information. Such short term decisions would lead to unpredictable fluctuations in funding with many adverse effects. The Fund Council's demand for, and response to, annual monitoring information also depends on the level at which the Fund Council decides on allocations to an MP. Corrective measures on an annual basis would seem to be conducted best by MP management (reporting to the Consortium Board) and responding to the new performance indicator information. This would be enhanced, particularly if management (with oversight by the Consortium Board) also has discretion over allocations of operational funds within the MP at the component level. However, the Fund Council would need to be informed of unexpected performance failures so that it could enforce corrective measures (considering also other measures than categorical fund reduction; for example, increased funding or enforcing change of research plans).

Although monitoring against criteria in the performance contract is conducted for accountability purposes, it is important that the processes encourage learning from experiences. This can lead to swift changes in the understanding of scientists and research direction and to any necessary corrective measures. This enhances team responsiveness and transparency. As MP teams very likely bring together researchers from very different organizational cultures, even within the CGIAR, the interpretation and use of monitoring information needs to be used for enhancing the coherence, dynamism and performance culture of the MPs.

Assembly, synthesis and wider communication of the data and information related to MP plans, progress and results are facilitated by the CGIAR's central project database, CGMap. Its flexible design can accommodate any kind of a matrix of suppliers (Centers) and priorities/programs (MPs).⁶

⁵ Publications, Co-publishing with NARS partners, Outcomes, Impact culture.

⁶ CGMap was built for managing Center and Challenge Program Medium-Term Plan data and its analysis. The database can facilitate collection of both descriptive and analytical information about plans, partnerships,

Building appropriate incentives

In designing the Performance Contracts it is advisable to learn from the experience of contract approaches from the past experience of 20 years or more in other organizations. This suggests that although the explicit links between resources and outputs are a positive feature of these types of contracts in general, there are still perverse effects and embedded moral hazards. The contract is intended to create an incentive for the research suppliers to act on the donors' interest (impact-oriented research with results that have a high probability of leading to significant developmental outcomes), while conducting an activity—research—that has inherent risks. However, as suppliers are risk-averse, the contracts do not work well if the expectation of perfect fulfilment of a contract actually works to prevent the intended incentives (i.e. to conduct ambitious research) and thereby limits progress towards the intended goals.

The SC's experience from using "output achievement" as an annual indicator is useful. Once the approach was instigated, the achievement of planned research targets was so high (nearly 90%) that it became obvious that Centers were not including risky strategic research in their Medium-Term Plans. However, it is evident that a research system will sometimes address unknowns and try to leverage major advances through research rather than merely application. There is an opposite experience from CPs that did not report in the PMS: Generation CP set overly ambitious targets—partly to attract research partners—and subsequently "under-performed" (according to the indicators set) but nevertheless performed very well.

Evaluation

Programs with annual or periodic indicators need to be subjected to periodic program reviews that ought to be an important mechanism for evaluating progress against the Performance Contracts. These could be linked to the time of extending program funding or when programs move from one phase to another.

Evaluations need to involve experts and subject matter specialists in areas relevant to the specific MP. To achieve some degree of comparability across MPs, consideration may be given to including an evaluation specialist for each review, preferably the same person. The funding of MPs no longer depends on the individual donors' specific criteria (e.g. strategies for development aid and objectives), but is based on fulfilment of the terms in the Performance Contract within agreed intervals. The purpose of the external evaluation therefore becomes three-fold: i) to assess overall performance as outlined in the Performance Contract; ii) to assess efficiency and effectiveness of program management in all important areas (research performance, benefits from partnerships, dynamisms in planning beyond contact term etc.); and iii) to provide strategic guidance for medium-term program development.

External evaluations should lead to program adjustments in subsequent new planning with funding both steering the changes and responding to the new plans. The evaluation process should stimulate self-assessment and learning and strengthen the incentives for high performance.

achievement etc. across the System as well as by clusters of Centers and MPs and can be used for monitoring purposes

Ex post impact assessment

The MP funding structure does not explicitly address the need for evaluation of the longer-term impacts from the System's research. Considering that it takes 10 or more years to achieve impacts in terms of CGIAR's ultimate goals, the documentation of these impacts cannot be planned within the MPs current funding cycle even if MPs were made responsible for conducting *ex post* impact assessment (IA) of the antecedent research within their focus area. There are, however, other activities related to impact planning, monitoring and documenting that are necessary and need to be included at the MP level, such as baseline data collection and impact pathway monitoring.

If the funding of *ex post* IA does not come from MP funds, it has to be allocated from the institutional funds to guarantee systematic documentation of impacts from all relevant areas of research. Impact evaluation may best be conducted by those Centers/Programs that also collect the baseline data and have access to the intended beneficiaries through their research partnerships and locations (discussed further in section 7). Institutionalizing impact assessment needs to be planned at the Center and Consortium level for MP areas and its funding needs to be decided by the Fund Council.

Contributions from an independent scientific advisory body and useful experiences of the SC

- ex ante assessment of MP proposals and review of proposals of subsequent Phases for MPs or MP components.
- guidance on critical quality, relevance, partnership, research achievement and impact elements in Performance Contracts.
- advice to Fund Council on MP performance reporting and synthesis of results
- commissioning and organising the independent MP reviews on behalf of the Fund Council.
- SC's experiences from CP reviews and deliberations of CP performance indicators⁷ assessing rigour and quality of impact assessments conducted by the Consortium Centres and Mega-Programs.

2 Monitoring of Center contributions to MPs

The Integrated Reform Proposal document states that: "The Consortium will put into place a common and strengthened performance management system (PMS) that captures key managerial and program effectiveness indicators which will allow Center Boards and Directors to manage." The need for Center performance monitoring seems to be two-fold: to monitor Center contribution to MPs (this component of the accountability contains only elements that are related to the MP research and Performance Contract content) and to monitor the overall performance - Center health, quality and research management – which is also under the Consortium oversight (see section 3).

The Performance Agreements, assuming that they only apply to the Center contributions to MPs—need to be in line with the Performance Contracts. What is said in general about MP monitoring applies to individual Centers and their partners as contributors to the MP. Assuming that the designated managers of MPs are responsible for what constitutes the MP research agenda, it is healthier for the coherence and accountability of the MP if the areas of individual

⁷ Conceptual Note for Integrated M&E for Challenge Programs by SPME, 2008. Unpublished.

Center responsibility are also monitored as part of the MP M&E, primarily through MP self-assessment. The experience from CPs indicates that CP research is reported both by the CPs and the Centers for their respective CP project funding leading to double reporting of plans and achievements and most likely also funding. From the Centers' perspective the CPs are donors. In the new CGIAR the MPs become both the delivery mechanism of a major part of the CGIAR's research and the complement of priority research topics. The point of gravity regarding planning and program funding needs to be within the MPs. Longer-term and stable and core-like funding supports such shift. For this reason MP related research consisting of individual Center contributions ought to be reported through the MP leadership whether residing in a Center or independent from a Center. The Strategic Team's idea of seeking synergistic results from planned overlap of the activities of the MPs may need to address the same issue.

3 Overall Center performance

Performance indicators

The current PMS, for the most part, applies best to monitoring of overall Center performance and not to monitoring of Center contributions to MPs. When the PMS is established to be used by the donors directly for making funding decisions, as has been the case with the CGIAR's current PMS, it may create pressure to achieve high indicator values, and so called "gaming" that can be quite unintentional. When the PM indicators are separated from direct donor funding decisions (as will be the case when Center performance ceases to be reported directly to donors) it will likely help make these indicators a more effective management tool. The indicators can be more nuanced and better focused on creating strong incentives for excellent performance in general areas of corporate and research management, and include mechanisms for feed-back, rewards and corrective action. Making performance measurement an internal process which becomes management responsibility under Board oversight would remove the pressures that may lead to "gaming" and perverse incentives. Furthermore, it is important for stimulating inclusion of more indicators for crucial research quality performance such as data management, access and use. This general area of data is important for the whole System but currently not well addressed (as discussed in a recent ADE report). A simple indicator with incentives deriving from donor rewards (or otherwise) would not bring the needed improvements. This would seem to be an argument for placing oversight for System policy and research management practices, as well as overall program quality in the hands of the Consortium Board.

External Center reviews

The integrated reform proposal envisages that Center external program and management reviews (EPMRs) will be replaced by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)'s performance report to the Fund Council and that reviews may be commissioned on an *ad hoc* basis at the CEO's discretion. Experience suggests that performance indicators are not a substitute for an institutional review although they may complement, be an input, or provide standard data to such reviews. The meta-evaluation of EPMRs (2007) concluded that in the increasingly complex environment of multiple partnerships and accountabilities, EPMRs were increasingly important for evaluating the effectiveness of the different relationships. The Center reviews would presumably still cover issues of institutional health and aspects contributing to productivity such as all aspects of management and culture not easily measured by simple indicators. External reviews can inform donors in their decisions regarding bilateral funding. Such reviews may prevent donors from conducting their bilateral project or Center based reviews.

One of the first-order activities expected from the Consortium is structural re-design. If mergers and closures of Centers are considered, external evaluation—at Center or cluster level—may be needed to look at Center contributions against CGIAR targets, feasibility of contributing to project success, regional coverage, complementarities, differences in competence, feasibility of mergers, comparable data on research performance etc. Institutional reviews can also inform Fund Council decisions on funding through the institutional window; indicator data are not sufficient for such decisions that have longer term implications and including on organizational structure.

The Center-Commissioned External Reviews (CCERs) were designed to review major elements of Center program and related activities and to provide inter-EPMR feedback to Center Boards and management as well as inputs to the immediately following EPMP. CCERs have been used by nearly all Centers presumably because they have been found useful for Board oversight of strategic issues, and program and management performance. It may be useful to think of incentives and funding mechanisms for such focused peer assessments at the Center level and which would provide input and add additional confidence to the CEO's assessment.

Contributions from an independent scientific advisory body and useful experiences of the SC

- commissioning and organizing external reviews in the future
- SC's experiences from the EPMP process and results

4 Center accountability to bilateral donors

The CGIAR Change is intended to improve the CGIAR System's efficiency and coherence. As the SRF is being designed for the entire System, it is desirable that bilaterally funded projects would also contribute to the SRF.

In the new system of funding and reporting currently countenanced, bilateral donors retain the right to request reporting and review the projects as before. If the size of the bilateral program within the CGIAR is very large, there is a risk that two parallel systems of M&E are retained/developed: one being similar to the current where individual donors request a considerable amount of reporting, Center/program reviews and information through an indicator system, and the second, common process of Centers and MPs reporting to the Consortium, and the Consortium reporting to the Fund Council, on the performance of MPs.

A parallel M&E system, or a number of *ad hoc* M&E actions that apply to the bilateral funding could place additional burdens on Centers and researchers that the current change process is seeking to alleviate. Even if bilateral projects would need to be fully costed, there would be a risk of the transaction costs from the additional review steps taxing the MP resources (such as human capacity) as well. Furthermore, such a parallel system would not be compatible with the bilateral donors' commitments as per the Paris Declaration, and its ratification at the Accra 2008 follow-up conference for greater donor harmony.

It would therefore be desirable that the measures for monitoring and enforcing accountability that are designed for the new System can satisfy also the bilateral donors' needs. Where legal commitments on donors demand very project-specific accountability this should be agreed to be met by relatively simple audits, complemented by existing evaluation materials.

Contributions from an independent scientific advisory body and useful experiences of the SC

- negotiations with and guidance to bilateral donors to find ways of using the System's existing mechanisms or readily available data and records to satisfy their individual needs.
- impact assessment to inform donors of the longer term success of their investment.

5 Performance across the System on specific areas of activity

Thematic and strategic reviews

There may be need for independent evaluation of themes or activities at the level of the Consortium or of clusters of Centers and MPs. Such reviews could assess the competences of the System in particular areas and the ways of acquiring such competency in key research disciplines (currently relevant, for instance, is the review of social science; increasingly in the future activities could involve evaluating competencies such as health and nutrition). Besides research disciplines *per se* performance in specific research-related activities, and those requiring common System's policies, such as intellectual property management; or support to program delivery, such as capacity building, also need to be reviewed by independent experts.

The thematic reviews can provide a benchmark for the state of the art in particular research approaches and the quality of the research providers of the CGIAR System relative to research supply from other sources. Such reviews necessarily include a large component of strategic assessment that sets the context for the activity being reviewed. They can combine evaluation with strategic foresight.

Contributions from an independent scientific advisory body and useful experiences of the SC

- commissioning and organizing strategic/stripe reviews in the future
- SC's experience from stripe reviews

6 System reviews

According to the integrated reform proposal, an *ad hoc* independent evaluation arrangement will review implementation of the strategy every six years at the System level. The Fund Council will commission this review with advice from the ISPC.

It would also seem necessary to implement periodic System's reviews as those instigated by the World Bank. These reviews would evaluate the functionality and performance of all the operating bodies of the System. A review of this sort will need to take place at a suitable interval following implementation of the "new" CGIAR to evaluate assumptions, capacities and performance.

7 Ex post impact assessment

Ex post IA is an essential ingredient in ensuring the continued support by investors to the CGIAR. EpIA activities that continuously build up, synthesize and summarise a credible body of evidence of the impacts of past investments for investors is integral to the monitoring and evaluation processes of the CGIAR System. IA is of crucial importance to the intention of the new CGIAR,

for which ability to increase measurable impact on poverty alleviation and other developmental goals is a major justification. The results provide CGIAR Members added confidence in the value of their past and current investments and inform the stakeholders and the greater public of the added value from the CGIAR and its partners.

The kinds of results indicators currently envisioned by the Strategy Team represent mostly complex chains of change and impacts of economic, social and environmental nature that require sound and innovative methods to be credibly documented and attributed.

Impacts of research on developmental goals accrue and are measurable often only a long time after the research has been completed. Therefore epIA is a continuous activity drawing on data and documentation from the past. In the new CGIAR epIA continues to measure impacts of research completed often several years ago but the IA priorities keep on evolving as numerous Center- and System-level IAs have been completed and new challenges have emerged. The new challenges fall into four major areas:

1. Developing and applying new IA methods in hard-to-measure areas such as NRM, policy and biodiversity research and training and capacity building;
2. Broadening the scope of IA beyond partial (economic) assessments, advancing further down the impact pathway toward indicators that reflect more closely CGIAR goals;
3. Making *ex post* IA more utilisation focused & improving use for strategic feedback; and,
4. Helping Centers enhance the coverage and rigour (credibility) of their IA efforts.⁸

These challenges are highly relevant both at Mega-program level and at the broader System level. The last challenge above merits some reflection in the context of the new order (Consortium).

In the new CGIAR there will be a continuing requirement:

- To provide CGIAR members with quality information on realized impacts
- To advise Centers in enhancing *ex post* IA and catalysing novel methodologies
- To encourage strategic feedback from *ex post* IA into the new SRF and Program activities

Advice from an independent advisory body with relevant expertise will be required for the first and third activity. It remains to be seen whether the second element of institutionalizing IA will require external independent input in the context of the new Consortium model or whether it will be taken on by the Consortium itself.

Contributions from an independent scientific advisory body and useful experiences of the SC

- establishing the overall efficacy of agricultural research as development assistance

⁸ The currently conducted activities include: organizing biennial SPIA-IA focal point meetings; providing quality oversight of IA case studies (policy research, environmental impacts); organizing international symposia on IA at professional meetings; and evaluating the quality of Centers' *ex post* IAs and the extent to which Centers are developing an IA "culture" using pre-established and agreed upon criteria and indicators within the CGIAR's annual PMS exercise.

- guidance for conducting impact assessment including expanding the coverage of IA beyond the areas that are relatively easy to measure (crop germplasm improvement) to more hard-to measure areas
- assessing rigour and quality of impact assessments conducted by the Consortium Centres and MPs
- raising and establishing standards and good practice in *ex post* IA
- conducting impact assessment at the System level
- guidance for institutionalizing impact assessment for the System (MP and System's impacts; new task)
- systematizing and better communicating to key stakeholders the IA work done in the CGIAR
- SC/SPIA's long term experience on epIA of agricultural research for development, including the areas listed above and its experience on the evolving discussion about epIA in the System and among practitioners.