

# Workshop on Strengthening Social Science in the CGIAR

## Summary notes

The one-day workshop on 27<sup>th</sup> March in Montpellier was organised by the Alliance of the CGIAR Centers, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the interim Independent Science and Partnerships Council. The workshop was organised to follow up on the 2009 Stripe Study on Social Science in the CGIAR with the aim to stimulate the first high level discussion on ways to improve the state of social sciences in the CGIAR.

The specific objectives were:

1. To establish broad consensus around the problem diagnosis and ways to improve the quality and relevance of social sciences in the CGIAR, including implementation of the review report recommendations.
2. To agree on priority research thrusts that can be pursued in the short- to medium-term and as part of the new programmatic approach and with support from re-allocated or new resources.
3. To agree on concrete actions where collective measures can be taken and joint planning is required; and to agree on staged dialogue, including with staff, stakeholders and the Consortium Board, for moving forward.

The list of participants is included at the end.

## Conclusions

There was broad agreement among the workshop participants with the diagnosis of the review panel. It was noted that the contrast between past and current social science quality and productivity is not quite as strong as presented in the report. The funding situation has affected both social sciences and biophysical sciences although the effect on social sciences has been more serious. There was also agreement that action is needed both from Centers individually in some aspects, and this has already begun, and from the System collectively to remedy the problems.

There is readiness to act on the capacity issue. It is important that some Centers take lead and in consultation with interested donors design a fellowship program that would bring new talent to Centers. The Rocky Docs program, which was considered highly successful, should be a model, but the lessons from that program should all be taken into account. It appears that there is interest among donors to support similar new initiative. The importance of mentoring was repeatedly highlighted.

It is agreed that the Mega Programs (MPs) may provide a good opportunity to consider the greater problems where social sciences may influence impact and concentrate resources and critical mass of social scientists to clearly defined areas. It was, however, less clear what the collective action would be in the preparation of MP proposals. One of the MP themes is intended to look at the core policy challenges, but all MPs require a social science component. Furthermore all Centers need strength in social science which needs to be contextualised and integrated to other disciplines.

Other issues that were agreed included: Stability of funding is a key issues rather than whether it is core or restricted. NARS capacity in social science deserves greater attention. Both ex ante and ex post impact assessment need to be strengthened (although the mechanisms to do that in the new research implementation structure of MPs are not clear). Quality of data collection and management need urgent attention. CGIAR's ability to be a convenor is one of its comparative advantages.

Further discussion is needed on where in the System foresight activities and priority setting linked to foresight should be placed. There is no consensus yet on the roles of the different bodies. While collective action and connectivity in social sciences is needed for the System, linkages between social sciences and others should be enhanced. Clarity is needed on where the different activities of social sciences map within the new CGIAR construct (impact assessment, foresight, data sharing etc.).

## **Notes of workshop sessions**

### **Welcoming remarks**

Mahmoud Solh

- Very timely review; action needed both at Center and system level.
- Apparent that funding type has affected also biophysical research.
- Aim of this workshop is to discuss how to strengthen social science in the CGIAR.

Derek Byerlee

- EPMRs have an established process to discuss in depth the findings and recommendations of the review and to monitor Centers' implementation of the recommendations. In systemwide, thematic reviews there is no such opportunity and therefore this workshop was considered needed.
- As background, nearly all EPMRs highlighted the weaknesses in Center social science research, including for example, difficulties in recruiting and retaining social scientists. The stripe review, after its in-depth assessment, confirmed these observations in its rather hard-hitting analysis, which needs to be taken seriously.
- The broad consultation that took place both in discussing the issues for the review and at the stage of drafting the report increase the credibility of the review's analysis.
- Follow-up requires consensus and clear plans for moving forward in concert with the significant changes taking place at the CGIAR.

Prabhu Pingali

- Bill and Melinda Gate's Foundation has been looking at the CGIAR for implementation and lead in its agricultural policy work. Serious gaps and shortcomings have been observed. The Stripe Review puts all these issues on the table.
- The issues needing most urgent attention are: lack of human capacity; lack of sustained support and lack of any major outputs coming from the CGIAR social science. While scientists know what needs to be fixed, the DGs vision is needed for commitment and driving the change. Donors are willing to engage in the follow-up.
- Three areas where tangible actions are needed:
  1. Attracting the best social scientists back to the system particularly in other locations than IFPRI (which has a clear locational benefit).
  2. Creating mechanisms for cross-Center activities and their funding. This means bringing Centers together around a problem; integrating commodity-linked social

science work with broader policy work; combining micro to macro social science issues in one major set of activities.

3. Making high quality talent available to Centers through visitor and post-doctoral programs. The Rocky Docs program created opportunity for the latter; and something equivalent could be designed. The prerequisite is to create incentives to people like academics to spend some time at the Centers. Donors would welcome ideas to move forward in this area.

### **Diagnosis** (chaired by Derek Byerlee)

Lead discussant, Jean-Philippe Platteau, Social Science Stripe Review panel

- Findings have more general validity than just the CGIAR and much of the analysis applies to natural sciences as well.
- Need for social science in the CGIAR is undisputable. When the research results do not meet the users, social science is clearly needed. Adoption of outputs is a fundamental question but there are only scattered answers to why there is lack of adoption.
- The panel recorded low performance. A vicious circle has been identified and needs to be addressed.
- Two major changes in the environment:
  1. Change in the composition in funding: proportion of restricted funding has increased dramatically in 1-2 decades. Hand in hand with this donors have begun emphasising quick and demonstrated results and the effect on Centers has been rapid increase in restricted programs of short duration. Aid efficiency has not been achieved.
  2. Competitiveness in agricultural research has increased. Particularly in advanced institutions, universities and institutes like the World Bank there are competitive skills. In the mid-level there is rapid growth in consultancy type providers of social science research.
- Consequences:
  1. Confusion of the real purpose of the CGIAR; is it development of research or a mixture of both. Quality and relevance are often contrasted as if there were a trade-off between the two.
  2. Dilution of precious time at all levels, including young post docs. Research and mentoring don't get enough time. Young scientists don't get the interesting programs that generate enthusiasm and prospects for their future, nor essential mentoring.
  3. Partnerships are increasingly formed for convenience and not sustained. Critical linkages with ARIs have gradually eroded, but also NARS observe move to short term with lack of continuity.
  4. Recruitment and retention issues are compounding the first change factor. The structural forces affect this rather than just compensation. The vicious circle includes mission drift and subsequently low morale of all but particularly the non-economists social scientists who are below a critical mass. Without proper focus and orientation, even large numbers cannot reach a critical mass – if well organised, half a dozen social scientists could constitute critical mass. Dependency on the short term has become a tragedy and paradoxically the system has become less effective for generating impact while running after more and more restricted small money.
- Among natural scientists, lack of understanding of what social science can do - particularly non-economic social science. Mutual understanding goes for both sides. Joint programs can facilitate this. Through a common program the usefulness of social science can be seen. There is also tension within the social sciences between different disciplines.
- Training has changed in the past 15-20 years and the skills of the students compared to past are much more impressive. Minimum skill requirements are now much higher than

before. However, being highly skilled but lacking appreciation of the deep issues and the bigger development contexts go often hand in hand and thus mentoring is essential. Closure of the Rocky Docs program has contributed to the human resource situation.

- Shortcomings regarding longitudinal data sets; better data, and more panel data, are needed. The CGIAR is remarkably situated to get these data but data collection is often poorly done. Again, mentoring is needed.

## Comments

Marc Rosegrant

- Rich analysis of the state of social science in the CGIAR and recommendations for reform of how social science research is done in the system. Some concerns:
  1. In the absence of an analysis of the CGIAR's social science research quality performance overtime, the unfavorable comparison of current social science research with the research in the earlier days of the system is too simplistic.
  2. Likewise, conclusion that Old Business model was better than current is too simplistic without longitudinal analysis of what aspects of each model contributed to successes.
  3. Similarities between then and now include lack of clear career paths for social scientists; move of best researchers to management or moving on to other organizations; social scientists in manager position have also done top work.
  4. Changing funding structure has had negative effects, but exposure of social science research to the market for research funds is positive.
- Characterization of three main areas for social science is useful<sup>1</sup>, however, rather than emphasizing area (1), integration is needed: policy research is needed in all areas of technology development. NARS, private sector, and developing countries universities' research now address agricultural productivity.
- Better focus on comparative advantage is needed indeed, and better choices of how and where to expand the portfolio of social science research and when not to do so.
- Two additional ways to improve social science in the context of the CGIAR reform process, in order to creating a critical mass of social scientists; of integrating social science research pertaining to technology and policy; and of integrating social scientist with biological scientists:
  1. Social science research should have a strong focus on the core policy challenges that have often prevented the effective use of agricultural technology for development<sup>2</sup> (as intended in MP 2).
  2. Strategic foresight and evaluation program (in or out of MP2) for linking horizontally across Centers and facilitating interaction between social scientists and biological scientists while providing integration of data bases and analytical tools to create a critical mass of social science work around essential technological change issues.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> (1) sustainable agricultural productivity increases by and for the poor; (2) conservation of the natural resources on which the rural poor directly or indirectly depend for crucial environmental services; and (3) institutional, policy, and technological innovation that enhance the quality of life for the poor and marginalized agrarian populations.

<sup>2</sup> lack of sound pro-agriculture and pro-poor macroeconomic and trade policies, low levels of public and private investment in agriculture; poorly performing markets and institutions; political economy and governance problems that hinder the effective implementation of agricultural technology, policies and programs; lack of a conducive environment for farmer-based organizations, agricultural cooperatives, and private-sector agricultural enterprises; and the limited political influence of smallholder farmers

<sup>3</sup> The goal of such a program would be to help achieve significant and urgently-needed improvements in the quality, timeliness, transparency and objectivity of strategic, system-level programmatic and investment decisions, including the design and maintenance of a balanced, effective, and efficient CGIAR R&D portfolio

## Frank Place

- At ICRAF, fragmentation has affected also natural scientists and thus they need to be engaged in the discussion of solutions. Two trends:
  1. Limited number of scientists have had to deal with the expansion of the agenda.
  2. Move from having a community of practice of social sciences to mainstreaming social science to all research themes. If there are no resources to follow-up on work decentralised on multiple programs, fragmentation occurs.
- There are trade offs; integration of social science to all projects and products has advantages but community of practice is lost. In the new CGIAR social scientists could come together at MP level to identify key outputs and outcomes. Resources will be needed as the transactions can be quite taxing.

## Discussion

- Some of the problems are not unique for social sciences, although the problems may be more severe in that area.
- CGIAR Centers have been convening places that bring together people from outside.
- Not all agendas have been donors-driven; Centers have been able to push through agendas with the donors choosing projects that contribute to larger goals and keeping strategic research issues separate from development. Centers need to push for longer term funding.
- MPs bring good opportunity to look at the greater problems and concentrate resources and critical mass to tackle the bigger questions better.
- Better management of overall data is really important.
- Social science (and impact analysis) should be directed to making better biophysical research. Ex post impact assessment is now too focused on highlighting the successes for donors' information.
- Regarding the review's finding about too many impact assessments, impact assessments are useful for establishing impact culture. More innovative IAs and adoption studies are needed using better tools and methods and broadening the purposes of the IAs.
- From donor perspective it seems that increasingly fewer people among the investors understand science; at the same time the agenda has become much broader. Good donors understandably want to see impact, but this requirement should not be for small/short duration projects. Donors that are competing and may feel need to demonstrate their results in terms of impact. Clarification and dialogue is needed.
- How to attract young scientists when there are more competitors and more opportunities for them? This needs collectively action. Rocky Docs program involved much enthusiasm about the experience, but the Docs' ability to acquire new skills and capacities depended very much on whom they worked with; isolation led to disappointments.
- With new recruits high level of skills and an ability to understand the context are essential.
- The donors should not be seen as THE problem. Shortcomings can also be found in the way Centers operate and they have occurred when unrestricted funding has been adequate.

## **Actionable recommendations with current resources and taking into account the change management process** (chaired by Ruben Echeverría)

Lead discussant, Pamela Anderson

- CIP has discussed the review's findings and developed a plan for follow-up which has been presented to the Board (plan which covers all the recommendations to be attached).
- CIP does not agree with the recommendation "shrinking non-productive social science groups". It considers particularly important to maintain decentralised social science groups at the Centers. First, social scientists gain the detailed knowledge of

commodities/natural research topics that is necessary and second talent in Centers is cumulative. As mentioned earlier, critical mass can be built even among small groups. Third, outcome and impact culture needs investment on social sciences at Center level.

- CIP has internally agreed on a plan of action (Appendix 1):
- In the new CGIAR performance contracts and outcomes will count. New research items likely to be included in the new MP elements. Across Centers structure of delivery, adoption patterns and behaviour etc. needs to be better understood. Partnerships should be the object of study. In designing the new agenda, MPs should not receive all the attention but also the platforms and how to link them with the programs should be considered.

### **Comments**

Kamel Shideed

- Social science involvement that is crucial to CGIAR objectives: Systems and livelihood characterizations; Technology evaluation, scaling out approaches, adoption monitoring, and impact assessment; Economics of NRM; Value-chain and market analysis; Research on policy options and institutions. Ex ante impact assessment needs increased emphasis
- Relevance is maintained through close interactions with biophysical scientists and national programs; Isolating social scientists leads to loss of context and loss of relevance to the CGIAR goals
- Social science contributes to generating impact (as important as measuring it): diagnostics tools, better targeting, establishment of baselines
- In ex post impact assessment more emphasis should go to: methodological improvement, NRM and policy, valuation of non-market benefits; environmental and social indicators; attribution. SPIA has provided a platform for CGIAR Centers to work together on IA for learning and economies of scale. epIA needs to have a stronger learning function
- Inter-Center social science team is needed for each MP as MPs require expertise beyond individual Center capacity; critical mass can be enhanced; synergies and complementarities can be created and duplication avoided.

Samarendu Mohanty

- Stability of funding is more essential than the proportion of core. Restricted funding can be used in a more focused way.
- Staff recruitment needs solutions. Dual purpose hiring – staff have project and divisional role. Mentoring is needed for helping new staff to gain field experience. IRRI has sought ways to upgrade post docs for making their compensation packages more competitive.
- Upgrading the skill set of nationally recruited staff (NRS) is also a question; this is addressed by in-house classes organised by new staff with good skills.
- Visiting scientists program is being re-established. Graduate students join programs and they bridge with local institutions.
- More focus on data analysis and collection, and making data available to outside world.
- For quality insurance publications remain a major output in assessments; they represent low cost quality control.

### **Discussion**

- Perceptions that the CGIAR is weak because its research does not reach farmers. Need to move to dynamic partnerships. Social science can provide inputs through interdisciplinary action at the interface of research and development.
- Social science serves institutional needs and thus needs greater flexibility. Stability in funding is needed (even if restricted).

- Ex post impact assessment requires longer term perspective and independence and thus the funding source is important. It needs to be separate from projects, but also allow enough time to learn.
- Priority setting forges interdisciplinary cooperation as the process deals with key data gaps and applications. Any cultural constraints to priority setting should be overcome.
- Research context is important. People who have sectoral and social science knowledge are attractive also to other employers, such as NGOs. Centers could run a collective induction program (introduction to farming systems) to mentor young persons to better understanding the context.
- Social science is location and culture specific. Strengthening partnerships with ARI is important, but so is strengthening the work of national scientists who operate in the field. Their work is very close to development problems. Synergy between NARS and ARI partnerships needs to be emphasised. NARS capacity building needs emphasis in MPs.
- In multi-disciplinary work each discipline tends to come with own disciplinary baggage. Disciplines need to understand what each brings to benefit the objectives. In social science/NRM collaboration, social science tends to be affected with funding shortages first and needs to communicate better how it contributes to interdisciplinary research.
- Social sciences should be valued for its ability to help generate impacts; avoid overemphasising the “rigor of science”. Social science helps contextualise the CG research to add realism and efficiency to the research done and to keep focus on the mission. In valuing staff different types need to be appreciated (combine being committed to mission and advancing research).
- Social science should not be outsourced from Centers or compartmentalised but critical mass needs to be improved; interdisciplinary linkages need strengthening;
- Experiences from joint appointment need to be analysed to use this form of recruitment better;
- Contacts are needed between CGIAR social science and both developing agencies and developing country social scientists.
- Recruitment of young scientists deserves action: young professionals’ fellowship program; recruitment of master’s degree students; visiting scientists’ schemes. It should be recognised that the employment market has changed and the CGIAR needs to compete with others.

**Actionable recommendations on human resources (capacity building and ARI linkages) with additional resources** (chaired by Greg Traxler)

Lead discussant, Rob Tripp, Independent consultant, UK

Three issues related to human resources:

- Job descriptions and career paths: What is expected from staff; from young scientists; sabbaticals; What are scientists rewarded for: research results or adoption? Analysis of alternatives outside the system; Skills required from staff; wide range of social science activities and thus no ideal social scientist profile. Research methods can cut across very practical to very sophisticated - from action research to very high level analysis; Recognition of range of skill packages, and types of careers.
- CGIAR’s role in building capacity in NARS: Who are the recipients of IPGs? Is there capacity to take up the CGIAR’s social science deliverables? A system that is theoretically based on CGIAR working hand in hand with NARS suffers from low capacity; what is the CGIAR’s role in NARS capacity building? Purpose of training should be clear; is it a conscious strategy to help universities to train (by focusing on graduate students at Centers)? Other training is also needed.

- Relationships with ARIs: Building up ARI relations requires clear thinking of objectives and incentives for ARI scientists to collaborate; particularly if CGIAR wants collaboration with the “global stars”.

## Comments

Bob Zeigler

- Excellent vs. relevance; Research and development – these are fundamentally flawed dichotomies. CGIAR’s claim needs to be doing excellent research for development.
- “Cutting edge” needs to include cutting edge in research and cutting edge in development. People involved need to have the same objectives and purpose. Scientists and social scientists have multiple roles: basic information, analysis, long term contributions to system and society, but also service component. Set of dual roles applies to all.
- Additional resource is uncertain, but current resources could be used more effectively. First: Young scientists; Good post docs and seniors working together with graduate students who will be the future post docs. Second: sabbaticals for rekindling relations with the ARIs. Third: internships. Prestigious early career award. Endowed chair. Mechanisms of recognition are needed.

## Discussion

- BMGF sees that strengthening CGIAR social science needs to happen in programs. Social science staff (25%) constitute a large investment. Means to strengthen programs include full costing, multiple years with renewal, and design around core issues in the CGIAR.
- How to focus social science and the big investment in it: social science’s role is to influence development. Elsewhere social science focuses on understanding; CGIAR can offer social science that focuses on influencing changes in the world.
- Respect. CGIAR culture needs to be about high quality applied social science research. Publishing in very good research journals triggers respect. But interdisciplinary journals are looked down and social scientists doing qualitative work feel not respected internally.
- Impact assessment may need additional resources (or reshuffled resources) and funding through a different mechanism than other activities to make IA work more attractive.
- How to attract staff: hardship allowances, improvement of remuneration at entry level; sharing recruitment information at System’s level; movement from Center to Center.
- More work is needed in interaction with donors. Few who donate have knowledge of agriculture and development.
- Agreement that capacity building needs emphasis and young scientists program can be established:
  - Sufficient time and staff for mentoring (endowed chair; retired scientists);
  - Field exposure through engagement of third parties (NGOs);
  - Joint mentoring and Cross-Center matching;
  - Including graduate students from developing countries
  - Incorporating capacity building in MPs (positions, mentoring, stable funding)
  - learning from earlier experiences
  - Match what students want to do with Center’s need
  - Students career after studies needs consideration
  - Pre-doc students helped establish relationships with universities
- Building relationships with ARI: The CGIAR has comparative advantage to attract scientists. Science on development issues, indicators, databases interest others to join. But regarding ARI there needs to be joint priorities on activities; they cannot be added on to



something that is already set up. Ideas are needed for joint programs; resources and results need to be shared. These conditionalities need to be discussed and understood.

- Use of trans-scientists: long-term senior scientists from ARI posted at Centers. Secondment process could be rekindled by the DGs.

### **Discussion of research themes within the new Mega Program structure** (chaired by Emile Frison)

Lead discussant, Carlos Sere, ILRI

- Demand for social science becomes likely bigger than before. We should avoid being too retrospective. Nature of work will change. More demand for the private sector, IP issues, engaging the BRICs; while other NARS get weaker than before. The landscape and partnerships become more complex. Social science will contribute to all that.
- Performance contracts will determine development outcomes; how can the CGIAR become more accountable for these? All need to accept that problems are more complex and require more long-term approaches. Risk has to be combined with performance contracts, which may need to be renegotiated (cutting and changing programs).
- Different social science approaches are needed for rapidly and systematically learning. Impact assessment needs to incorporate a learning function. Innovation systems and platforms can give real time evaluation of research. On-going stewardship is needed.
- Evaluation will be of huge importance in the future; it needs to be better and there is likely to be more of it. Where will it be: platform, Consortium, ISPC or elsewhere? What new skills are needed? Understanding context is important; evaluation is needed in-house, but also to be kept at arms length. The two dimensions need to be combined.
- Implication on how the MPs will work. Common cross-cutting issues need to be addressed. Networking capability around communities of practice needs to be emphasised. Social science has a meta-function on how Centers work together, how partnerships function; how Centers, partners and stakeholders organise themselves.
- The three areas for social science mentioned in the report require importance but need to be integrated. Should policy be in MP4 or in a platform? Technology is a more traditional area of CGIAR. Gender needs an instrument across – a platform. What is the smartest way of defining role for social science?

### **Comment**

Frances Seymour

Presentation attached in Appendix 2

Bekele Shiferaw

- Proposed MP structure has significant overlaps. We need to be careful and avoid duplication. MPs have implications on what kind of social science is needed; social science needs to be mapped into the MP structure (currently MP2 has social science content; others need social science for facilitating adoption).
- Interdisciplinary work needs to be maintained. Social science input is needed in biophysical research. How are cross-cutting aspects addressed (e.g. seed systems)?
- Regional system's analysis and data collection are important across MPs. The System needs to understand long term changes and to generate knowledge that can be generalized. Generating data at farming systems or regional level could be incorporated into MP1.
- Degree of computational support and collaboration in software applications is needed in CGIAR. Biometricians work with breeders, but social science relies in its own econometric skills. Additional skills at systems level would be desirable.

- Multi-sectoral, global modelling is required at System's level.

Ruth Meinzen-Dick

- Common property and collective action need to be reviewed as themes. In addition to MP2 every MP has an element of that. Poverty alleviation requires capacity in understanding needs and interventions.
- For gender a platform has been recommended. Gender is a fundamental social science concept in MPs and a matter of development effectiveness (research and policy needed).
- Social science also has lots to offer to the CGIAR reform. Social network analysis could help – what kinds of collaborations are already going on and how can they be built on. Analysis among farmers is being done, could also be done among CG.
- There is hunger for collaborators with other like-minded researchers. Researchers need space (without DGs) for building partnerships. CAPRi and gender debates often involve researchers who feel marginalised. In these environments people give time generously.
- Mechanisms are needed for sustained interactions. CAPRi has given that, but for gender CGIAR has not been so good. Opportunities, such as professional weekends, are needed for linking with each other, including top experts and national collaborators. Social science needs local knowledge, but NARS are often very weak.
- How to organize social science research within and across Centers and MPs. Social science is needed at every Center and there is need to link social science across Centers and MPs. Social science needs to convince biophysical research of its necessity. Showcasing social science research needs opportunities at different levels: internal meetings and professional societies, working papers to be made available quickly and freely and for wide dissemination also to non-specialists.

Michel Petit.

- International Centers have a huge comparative advantage in convening capacity. Choice of themes needs to be based on this. Convening capacity is key in defining strategy.
- In defining themes in the new structure something could be missed that is increasingly important. That is basic knowledge: data sets, georeferencing, approximation of who are the small scale farmers who are targeted. We must recognise that the reality is very diverse. Fragmented baselines do not help.
- The case on modern agriculture needs to be remade. Small farmers face the risk of marginalisation. Understanding small farmer characteristics is required to contributing to MDGs. CGIAR can convene this knowledge. MP structure should not lose these aspects.
- There is need to convene all those exercising foresight: IFPRI, FAO, UK, EC, French, IAASTD and others). They represent richness that comes with different methods. We need to capture the potential of what foresight can do for our business. Foresight includes looking at future of agricultures and world governance issues, which is not part of traditional research agenda. World governance is a critical aspect in Climate change, REDD, trade and other issues, but in crisis. CGIAR Centers are very well situated regarding convening discussions to deal with these issues.

## **Discussion**

- Decisions are needed not only on MPs but also on platforms. There is need to integrate social science to other research within the context of MPs.
- Once MPs are agreed, need to write plans articulating social science input in all MPs. Quality issues need to be addressed. Teams developing next steps must be well resourced.

- Thinking through impact pathways helps to see where natural and social sciences can be integrated in big way. Real relevance of SS needs to be assessed, not just supply.
- MPs should derive more clearly from the SRF, which has involved an enormous effort very recently. A dotted line, a logical link, is needed from SRF, which out to define the big outputs, to MPs, which build on these. Then one would see better areas where social science can contribute. MPs should avoid becoming uni-disciplinary.
- Every MP, or component of activity, needs a compelling case. Outputs and outcomes will be needed and case must be made.
- Some sense that SRF was done in a top-down way. Now there is advocacy to do this in a bottom up way. Those involved in the research need to be involved in the SRF process. It becomes an iterative process. Working from bottom up introduces heterogeneity, but ultimately scientists cannot make the choices by themselves.
- Further refinement may not provide the answer ever. The current portfolio may not necessarily involve greater transactions. Boundaries can be set. It is not axiomatic that Centers cannot make the boundaries. When it becomes apparent that something doesn't work very well, it can be shifted. Plea to have the conversations, benchmarking against transaction costs, need to demand for clarity, but no absolute answer.
- If foresight role is to provide clear directions to strategy and priority setting, then the body should have a level of independence. Do we want a standing foresight group or a periodic group for doing that? Support for a non-standing body that would be strategically pulled together for a particular need. Should not be placed in an independent box too firmly.
- Linked to foresight there are many functions: strategic planning is with Consortium, independent evaluation, SPIA, science task force; proliferation of bodies is a risk.
- Whole system needs to contribute to foresight. Production of foresight as common knowledge, even an IPG, which therefore can be distinguished from strategy and priority setting exercise. Foresight produces information for a lot of actors. For it to be valid, one needs to find ways of engaging stakeholders.
- Regarding foresight; periodicity can be noted. ISPC should not be the only body of wise people. Interim process, ideas come together, and system needs to identify where foresight study is needed. Both ISPC and Centers should bring value. Dynamic tension is great.
- Regarding convening, CGIAR can only convene where it has programs or track record to offer. Otherwise CG does not speak from point of authority.
- Regarding gender, platform is not a substitute for accountability from top; more a way of delivering on that. Mainstreaming requires accountability which is for Center management to declare. Then bottom platform activities can contribute.
- There is a lack of sentinel sites for longitudinal research in tropical areas. There is an ecological need for maintaining such sites. With new MPs, advantage could be taken of the ASB established sites where there is such a knowledge of the system that can be updated. Possibilities are huge if we can agree on the concepts.

#### **Next steps** (chaired by Mahmoud Solh)

Lead discussant, Shenggen Fan, IFPRI

- Clear that social science research is important; it contributes to mission through major channels. Indirectly it helps development and adoption of improved technologies. It will help policy makers to allocate resources more effectively.
- CGIAR has advantages: investment in many countries and regions; repeated surveys to generate data to tracking policy impacts; social sciences working closely with natural scientists; extensive field experience as 30-40% of time in spent the field. Close to policy making processes; Convening power, dialogues, conferences, networking.

- Ways of strengthening social science include networking within social science in the CGIAR. DGs need to facilitate an enabling environment for social scientists to work together. For example, joint positions with several Centers will help solve some problems.
- Need to set up some programs to engage young bright scientists through fellowship programs. Funding is needed for that.
- Relationships with NARS need strengthening, including capacity strengthening. CGIAR facilitates impact of research by supporting NARS. Potential policy solutions will be transmitted to policy makers by partners which enhances their acceptance.
- Scientific exchange is needed for attracting ARI scientists but also NARS scientists to spend time at CGIAR Centers.
- DGs should allocate more money to support social science doing research, including strategic thinking and mentoring. Resource allocation needs to be a priority.
- Need to measure what impact comes from social science. Journal articles are given value, but many other outputs bring impact that assessing social science needs to capture.
- Endowment chairs can help retain and attract high quality social scientists.
- Development outcomes include gender, poverty, natural resources and small farmer income, in addition to improved technologies. SRF will demand very rigorous M&E process and social science will play a key role in designing and implementing this.
- Big thinking is needed. MP is needed on income and policies. Policy research (including macro policy) will be important (trade, poverty nutrition etc policies). But all other MPs need to have a strong component on social science.
- A platform for foresight should be somewhat independent and donors could be involved. There should be a strong link with Centers for feed-back and interaction.
- As a follow-up from this workshop, the summary notes need to be circulated also to the Social scientists. Centers must be seen as being serious about incentives and improving social science in the CGIAR

## Comments

Lynn Haight

There are three areas where the Consortium could help:

- Leadership:
  - Decisions are desperately needed; about overlap and being able to drop certain subject matter despite Centers being keen on them etc.
  - Coordinating role for platforms. Platforms need to be kept at the level of Centers.
  - HR programs that can be Center-based but coordinated. G&D at MP level, data at Consortium level.
  - Strategic planning should not be compartmentalised; it needs blood and oxygen and thus outside people, creating synergy between consortium, Centers and ISPC. There should not be separate bodies. A lot more interaction at Centers and scientists outside the Centers. The Board has convening capacity and can help.
- Shared services have a role for the Consortium.
  - Data has been repeatedly mentioned. It could be centrally stored and used.
  - IPGs and how they lead to adoption and impact. Consortium may need to spend a lot more time discussing this.
  - Social networking coordination is interesting prospect for the Board.
- Consortium Board must take some of the lashes and act on behalf of the Centers. There is often a real gap between what the donors want to be reported, and how the Centers

interpret that. For example, what does impact mean? Inform donors where program should go or not go. Board could support initiatives to get funding for specific things at Centers.

Gebisa Ejeta

- Board needs to oversee clarity of mission and program effectiveness. The next steps involve not only social science but the broader concern with professional effectiveness and mission. As individuals can we empower ourselves to deliver more effectively.
- We need to recognise the reality of institutional structure and mission. ARI, Centers and NARS need to be engaged. Discovery linked to delivery requires several agencies of change. Donors think of one-stop shop, but the CGIAR cannot become the delivery mechanism. We need to recognize what our role is. The CGIAR has an inherent comparative advantage to a bridge between ARIs and NARS.
- Role of scientists. Can we rationalise how to solve real life problems and be good scholars? Develop respect for scholars at all levels. Develop balance and convergence to contributing to the solution of problems. We are research scientists. Particularly with social science, when it was brought into the international agenda, it was done for helping people to think big. Social science brings in reality check regarding solutions.
- Funding. Mechanisms are needed that give the CGIAR resilience, effectiveness, flexibility and nimbleness. The CG system has been placed in sustained insecurity. It needs dialogue with the donors and continuity on problem diagnosis and solutions.
- In Partnerships discussion the role of various entities need to be identified. Both rigor and ability to solve problems is needed. Impacts come from the contributions of entire machinery with different kinds of partners. Transformative changes come from collaborative efforts and CGIAR needs to be sensitive about inclusion of all institutions.

Prabhu Pingali

- Gates is very committed to the CGIAR and a long term player in the System.
- Future of social science needs to be connected to the Centers' ground work. IFPRI has an enormous role but social science is needed also at the commodity and natural resource Centers. It is essential to figure out how social science can be revitalised at the Centers.
- Actions must be Center-led. Mechanisms are needed for a more collective approach and for bringing in new resources. A long term CGIAR social science fellowship program is needed, in which multiple donors should participate for making it viable.
- Along similar lines, a retiree program could be an interesting option. Think of mechanisms to attract retirees to spend time at the Centers. Endowment chair, JPO program and other ways of getting new people and new capacity need consideration.
- Data management is a big and important issue. Data are needed to track changes and impact of work that has been done. Managing data across system and disciplines could be closely overseen by the Consortium Board. Data management needs to build on what is already there (other organizations data; World Bank, Harvest Choice etc.)
- All interested parties should be involved in discussing the sentinel sites (Earth Institute)
- Need to think of alternative ways of organising M&E; social scientists have been too much drawn into it. Can this work be contracted out and who could do it with lower opportunity cost. Need for consolidation and asking donors to be less demanding.

## **Discussion**

Consensus on tangible suggestions for next steps included: endorsement of the need for a young scientists program in the System; support for joint appointments, but learning from earlier experiences; operationalizing how social science staff in the System can be more

connected; bringing distinguished people back to Centers, for example through a return talent program; building capacity building and new recruitments into MPs; solving how social science is addressed in MPs, including issues of community of practice and critical mass; addressing data management problems; solving how foresight can be done, funded and coordinated.

#### Closure

1. Summary report will be circulated.
2. Centers need to develop type of proposal for capturing and developing talent. Consortium Board could be the conduit to approach Rockefeller and get other donors involved. Centers will provide ideas of what could be included.
3. Visiting scientists program, including joint appointments.
4. Importance of networking of SS in different Centers. More interaction among SS in different Centers needs to be developed. Also in other areas where interaction among scientists is needed.
5. Data issues need to be addressed.

### *List of participants*

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Mauricio Bellon	Bioversity international
Ruben Echeverría	CIAT
Frances Seymour	CIFOR
Bekele Shiferaw	CIMMYT
Jonathan Hellin	CIMMYT
Pamela Anderson	CIP
Mahmoud Solh	ICARDA
Kamel Shideed	ICARDA
Maarten van Ginkel	ICARDA
Aden Aw-Hassan	ICARDA
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Mark Rosegrant	IFPRI
Marie Ruel	IFPRI
Ruth Meinzen-Dick	IFPRI/CAPRI
Stacy Roberts	IFPRI
Carlos Sere	ILRI
John McDermott	ILRI
Bob Zeigler	IRRI
Samarendu Mohanty	IRRI
David Raitzer	IRRI
Colin Chartres	IWMI
Mark Giordano	IWMI
Frank Place	World Agroforestry Center
Steven Hall	WorldFish Center
Gebisa Ejeta	iISPC/CGIAR Consortium Board
Lynn Haight	CGIAR Consortium Board
Paul Zuckermann	Bioversity International Board of Trustees
Michele Veeman	IFPRI Board of Trustees
Anne-Marie Izac	The Alliance of CGIAR Centers
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Prabhu Pingali	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
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Iain MacGillivray	Canada
Shantanu Mathur	IFAD
Rob Bertram	USAID
Derek Byerlee	iISPC
Jeff Sayer	iISPC
Sirkka Immonen	iISPC Secretariat
Peter Gardiner	iISPC Secretariat

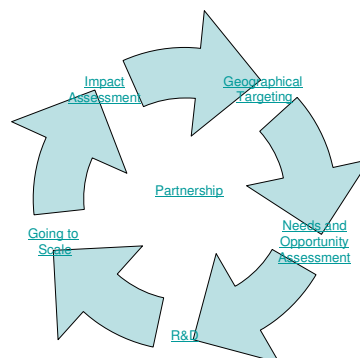
## Actionable recommendations with current resources and taking into account the change management process

Strengthening Social Sciences in the  
CGIAR  
27 March 2010

### 2e). Social Sciences cannot be outsourced

- Integral
  - all stages of Pro-Poor R&D Cycle
- Embedded
  - Collaboration/trust social and biological scientists
- Commodity knowledge intensive
  - Socio-economic analysis of True Potato Seed
- Cumulative
  - Standing on shoulders of eg Bob Rhoades (anthropology) and Tom Walker (ag econ)
- Increased demand for SSR with SRF and CPs
  - More emphasis on measuring outcomes, poverty and gender
  - Skills for institutional analysis (partnerships), value chains and agricultural-health linkages

SSR at CIP: integral to Pro-Poor R&D Cycle





**Geographical Targeting:**

Overlaying potato production and importance from livelihood perspective

**Needs and Opportunities Assessment:**

Ex-ante analysis of reduction in DALYs in SSA by promoting beta-carotene rich sweetpotato

**R&D:** Capturing farmers’ and other users’ preferences in Participatory Plant Breeding

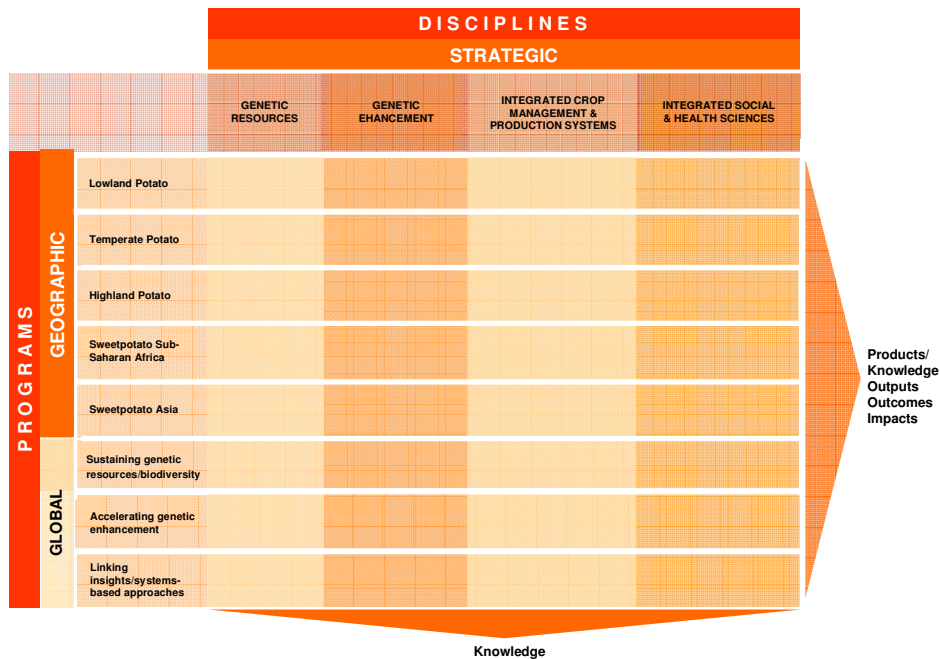
**Going to scale:**

Participatory Market Chain Approach for innovation:

Value added with native potatoes in the Andes

## What’s actionable?

1. Undertake essential management reforms
  - Promote high quality social science (IPGs) eg 30% time for strategic SSR in addition to vital “service function” embedded in Pro-Poor R&D Cycle (institutionalized via workplan/ performance assessment)
  - Check balance of social and biological scientists and improve NRS support to IRS social scientists
  - Resist donor pressure for low quality pervasive outcome measurement (baselines everywhere!)
  - Mainstream gender analysis at all stages of research



## What's actionable?

2. Reorganize and refocus Social Science
  - Strengthen in house capacity for SSR by improving linkages across centers and with ARIs
  - Improve long term partnerships with ARIs, begin with a mapping exercise of needs and opportunities
  - Collective action by linking and partnering with other CG centers for particular activities using a shared framework (eg adoption studies, current BMGF adoption project in SSA excellent example)

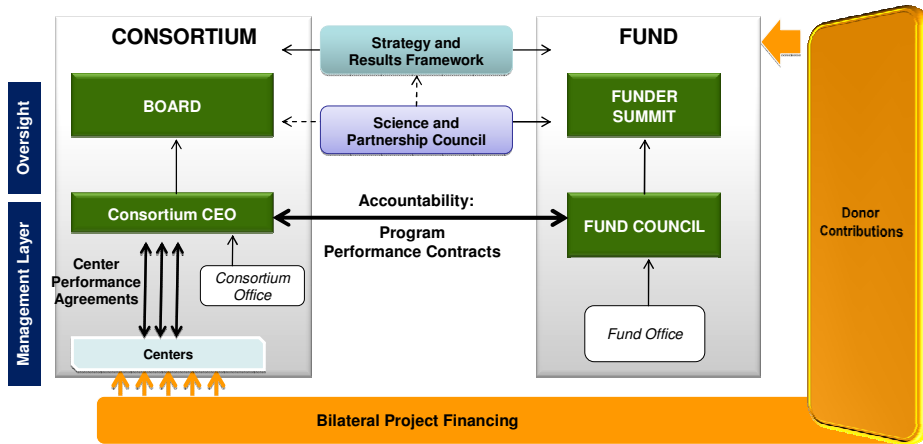
## What's actionable?

3. Update SS personnel management practices
  - Identify existing opportunities for Young Scientists in SS (JPOs, MSc thesis, etc.)
  - Strategic HHRR should look specifically at SS

## What's actionable?

4. Foster a culture of rigorous social science research
  - Work with Research Informatics Unit to extend protocols for data collection management and storage to social science (human subjects includes issues of confidentiality)
  - SS seminars as part of the Center's seminar series

## THE NEW CGIAR



### What's actionable – System level?

#### PLATFORM FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES

- Permanent system-level home for “trust in evidence”
- Targeting-Modelling (especially for MP1)
- System-wide methodology
- Advanced research on indicators and impact assessment – beyond traditional IRR
- Linkage with Gender Platform

## Appendix 2.

# Thinking big in the social sciences

*Comment by Frances Seymour*

*Workshop on Strengthening Social Science in the CGIAR*

*Montpellier*

*March 27, 2010*

## Introduction

Many thanks to the interim Independent Science and Partnership Council and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for organizing this event. Thanks also to the authors of the Stripe review report. I am a big fan of the report, and when it was presented at the Science Council meeting that took place on the CIFOR campus in Bogor last September, the findings resonated with the many CIFOR staff in attendance as well.

In preparing for this meeting it occurred to me that my first job out of graduate school was to serve as the junior assistant to a high-level team led by Gordon Conway that was reviewing, among other things, the impact of the Ford Foundation's attempts to increase the role of social science in the CGIAR system. That was almost 25 years ago. So perhaps our colleagues from BMGF should ask the Ford Foundation to dig into their archives for the evaluation of the last round of efforts in this direction!

I'll focus my remarks on what is Recommendation 2(c) in the Stripe review report.

Let me follow Pamela Anderson's example and start by saying what I do not agree with: I do not agree that there should be a Mega-program on "Regional Systems Analysis", nor do I believe that there should be a "Platform on Social Science" for all the reasons that were already articulated in the morning sessions.

I will use my time to tell two stories from current CIFOR experience that I believe validate the diagnosis of the Stripe review panel and elements of their proposed response, and then close with a specific actionable recommendation.

## The problem of "small think"

The first story illustrates the problem of "small think" diagnosed by the report authors, and their welcome call for the CGIAR to aspire to social science impacts of international significance. (I note that their conclusions challenge the view held by at least a few people in this room that somehow policy and natural resources management research are inherently limited in their potential impacts compared to traditional technology-oriented CGIAR research domains.)

Yesterday, Peter Gardiner and I dropped in on the third and last day of a workshop organized by CIFOR, CIRAD, and IRD on the future of community forestry. It was apparently a very successful workshop in the view of participants, with many good presentations and discussions. But according to my colleagues, to a certain extent much of the proceedings

could be characterized as a “battle of the case studies”: those who start with the presumption that communities are inherently better stewards of forests had case studies to prove their point; those who believe that communities are rational economic actors who will destroy forests if their incentives are aligned to do so had case studies to prove their point as well. At yesterday’s closing session of the workshop, there was agreement on the need for more rigorous, comparative research – especially on political economy issues – to be able to say something more about questions like this than, “it depends”. And I note that this is exactly the kind of research that people like Arun Agrawal and Elinor Ostrom have been doing.

## **The promise of a global comparative approach**

The second story is about CIFOR’s new Global Comparative Study on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD). One of the things I’ve tried to do during my tenure at CIFOR has been to organize the preponderance of our research around global comparative approaches to understanding and influencing forest-related policy and practice in six areas. It has been difficult to reach that objective by piecing together small restricted grants with different timeframes, geographies, etc.

But we’ve taken advantage of what might turn out to be a one-time pulse of significant funding from the Norwegian government for one of our research areas – the role of forests in climate mitigation – to launch something that is quite rare in “Forestry World”: rigorous, multi-country, multi-site analysis of interventions that builds in experimental design (before-after/control-intervention). CIFOR scientists are currently in struggling with all the challenges of site selection, partnerships, and methods development, so I know how difficult such studies are, but the benefits are likely to be immense.

As predicted by the Stripe review report, we are already beginning to realize the benefits of “thinking big”:

- The REDD Global Comparative Study is attracting interest from top external scientists. In January, we discovered it would be cheaper to have a methods meeting in Chapel Hill, North Carolina than in Bogor, because so many faculty from UNC, Duke and NC State Universities would be participating. My email box is full of inquiries from European and Australian universities wanting to coordinate with us; they are not looking for a piece of our grant, but instead the opportunity to fit their sites and their students into something bigger.
- As the Stripe review authors predicted, the study is also starting to be a factor in our recruitment and retention of scientists.
- And one thing the review authors did not predict was the impact on target audiences: we are starting to be approached by government officials and project proponents who want their jurisdiction or project site included in the study. By capitalizing on this interest, we can build in a high level of ownership on the part of eventual clients for the research findings.

All of this combines to validate the point made by John McDermott this morning: The CGIAR can position itself as the employer or partner of choice for those who want to be part of something significant with the potential to change the world. If we build it, they will come.

## **An actionable recommendation: Sentinel sites in mega-programs**

Now for the actionable recommendation.

While I disagreed with the Stripe review's recommendation for a separate mega-program built around what they called "sentinel sites", I would like to appropriate their idea with a somewhat more limited focus as a desirable element of one or a few mega-programs. I can imagine that long-term commitments to research at particular sites could provide the kinds of longitudinal panel data, as well as the more qualitative understanding of a particular context, that we discussed this morning as being so important to good social science.

For example, (and I am not making this suggestion to pander to Derek Byerlee) I would propose focusing on the specific issue of landuse change, as competition for land to produce food, fuel, fiber, and environmental services intensifies. With careful design of a core set of methods, long-term research at the landscape scale at a number of sites could help illuminate not only the drivers of and conditions for land-use change, but also its impacts on livelihoods, biodiversity, carbon emissions, and climate resilience. Such sites could be anchors for a number of global comparative studies of relevance to a number of the currently-proposed Mega-programs. Clearly such studies would be central to the proposed mega-program on Forests and Trees (which is closest to my heart), but would also be relevant to MP5 (land degradation), MP7 (climate change), and possibly others.

Further, new investment in such "sentinel sites" could build on a number of existing sites for which some data is already available. We have begun discussing this idea with World Agroforestry -- which is building the concept of "benchmark sites" into some of its research planning -- and agree that one place to start would be at the "benchmark sites" established under the Alternatives to Slash and Burn System-wide program more than a decade ago. One example is the Jambi site in Sumatera visited by members of the Science Council last September, which provides an excellent laboratory for understanding the conversion of forests to oil palm plantations.

### **Summary**

I firmly believe and agree with the Stripe review panel that the CGIAR has the potential to generate world class social science. Two approaches to realize that potential are to "think big", and organize our research around global comparative studies, and to invest in "sentinel sites" for the long term.

Thank you.