

10th Meeting of the Standing Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation (SPME)

Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium: 2 September, 2008

Proceedings

Present:

Ken Fischer, SPME Chair

Members:

Paul Vlek

Oswaldo Feinstein

Sirkka Immonen, SPME Secretary

The SPME meeting comprised of a session open to observers and closed sessions for internal SPME discussion. The following persons attended parts of the meeting as observers: Rodomiro Ortiz (ADE Chair), Manny Lantin (CGIAR Secretariat), Ruben Echeverria (SC Secretariat), Rémy Noe (EC).

Item 1: Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair, Ken Fischer, welcomed all to the SPME meeting and thanked SPME members for their contributions since the previous meeting. In the open meeting he gave a brief summary of the items discussed during the closed working session of the Standing Panel.

Item 2: Review and Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted with no changes.

Item 3: Minutes and Follow up Action from last SPME Meeting

A progress report on action items from SPME9 was made available for members.

Item 4: Medium-Term Plans and Strategic Plans

SPME focused on its discussions on three items related to the MTP process: the content of the MTP Overview; the assessment of individual MTPs; and the SC's discussion of the MTPs in the plenary.

In the Overview SPME intends to take stock of the evolution of the MTP into i) a document useful for the Centers' internal planning and monitoring and ii) informative for the external users and for the System's monitoring and evaluation. Also the rationale for the SC moving its attention to the Center Strategic Plans should be explained. It is important to emphasize that SC's review of the Strategic Plans was not for approving them, but for giving guidance on matters related to the System relevance.

The Standing Panel noted that the MTPs are still variable in terms of the relevance of the research planned and the clarity and coherence of the MTP presentation. In some cases the MTPs demonstrated clearly that the SC's guidance had been helpful for bringing focus into

the research plans and improving the coherence of the MTP presentation to form a sound basis for internal monitoring. Dialogue at the joint SC/ADE meeting should help identify ways of bringing eventually all the Centers to the level of MTP design where the SC does not need to review them annually. Regarding further changes to the MTP, the Standing Panel acknowledged that changing the guidelines would not be appropriate given the work that had gone into transforming the process into an on-line submission that involved software design. However, the SC in its guidelines to the Centers can be more elaborate about the content it expects to see.

- 1) Most importantly, the narratives ought to be concise and informative and less verbose.
- 2) In the logframe, the intended users should be more specifically identified.
- 3) SPME also questions the value of the impact column in the logframes.

The Standing Panel decided to suggest to the SC that in the MTP submission the most recent report of output target achievement should be included to allow the SC reviewers to assess the track record of Centers in achieving previously agreed output targets. Following a strong recommendation from a joint Performance Measurement System (PMS) workshop (see item 5) that output target achievement be delinked from PMS and moved to the CGMap, the achievement tracking report will be submitted each year together with the MTP. This report can be downloaded from CGMap as part of the MTP document for the SC to review.

The Panel agreed that the discussion under SC10 Item 3 on MTPs should focus on a few key issues of the SC's draft commentary for those MTPs which the SC still found shortcoming in terms of clarity and description of a relevant agenda for research that the Center/CP should address. The commentaries should be useful for the Centers. It is foreseen that the MTPs of several more Centers (in addition to the 5 identified last year) are now of sufficient quality to be moved to the schedule of periodic MTP review.

With the evolution of SC's attention on the MTPs to a periodic exercise, the SC is switching its attention to Center Strategic Plans. Its intervention is advisory only, as it offers comments to the Center Board prior to finalization of the Strategic Plan by the Board. The SC developed a brief set of criteria to use in its commentary; these focus on issues of System relevance and linkages and were shared with the ADE. So far the SC has provided comments to two Centers. SPME feels that there is need to agree on the commentary at the SC level. The MTP commentary following a Strategic Plan assessment should not contradict the latter. There was also a view that, in order to make the Strategic Plan stronger, the SC should be able to comment on issues other than strictly identified in the criteria, but these additional comments could be sent to the Center separately from the public commentary.

SPME Action

- Finalize the MTP Overview for SC endorsement
- Incorporate changes into the MTP guidelines:
 - Size limits
 - Remove impact from logframe
 - Strengthen content for immediate users and planned outcomes

Item 5: Performance Measurement System**a) Center performance**

SPME acknowledged that the decisions made at the joint PMS Workshop in Washington in July 2008 were in agreement with the improvements that Standing Panel has been suggesting and that were presented by the SC at ExCo14. These include removing the output target achievement reporting from the PMS to the new MTP database, CGMap; introducing three output indicators: publications (consequently removing the element of quality and relevance of current research), capacity building and data management as IPG; adjusting the requirement for outcome cases to Center size; and improvements in the overall set by establishing benchmarks and performance targets and simplifying the institutional indicators. While the final decision on changes is pending on ExCo approval, some progress has been made on the proposed new output indicators.

The new draft component indicator for publications (in the revised PMS considered as outputs rather than indicators of potential to perform) was introduced already at the workshop. It combines the old indicators 4A (also to include published cultivars) and 4B and adds a new sub-component that is based on publishing in high-impact factors journals. There has been a suggestion to calculate the indicator value on per dollar basis. SPME, however, argued that that publications by scientist is a more appropriate measure because a) there are too large differences between Center on what research costs, b) publications are intellectual products and should therefore be counted per scientists producing them, and c) comparability of the results is maintained because publication productivity is also elsewhere reported by scientist.

For designing the capacity building indicator, the SC Secretariat had contacted the ADE for initiating the work with the Center training focal persons. Subsequently it had established a Wiki site in where Center focal persons' opinions and materials provided by them were posted. SPME recommended that the indicator would focus on (but not limited to) training which would be more feasible and was a principle activity at Centers for achieving increased capacity. There was a suggestion from Rodomiro Ortiz consider relative number of thesis, volume of training and visiting scientists as possible indicators. It was agreed that some testable ideas would be formulated, shared again with the focal persons and finally discussed with the ADE in the joint SC/ADE meeting in November. Subsequently any feasible indicators would be tested on a few Centers in 2009 prior to adding the indicator to the PMS.

SPME Secretary reported that the ADE was leading the discussion on data management and QA , including design of indicators. It was noted that the CGIAR External review and the Stripe Review of Social Science in the CGIAR have both raised the issue of curation and access to reliable data over the time as an important output.

Regarding the outcome indicator, SPME emphasised that this indicator comes closest to an actual impact indicator which we currently do not have and therefore should be of interest to the donors. This indicator aims at measuring a real outcome; it is not a proxy of outcomes. It is the only indicator where the SC can exercise some assessment of relevance and mission (following certain criteria). However, some degree of systematic scoring is needed to keep the indicator assessment consistent across Centers and as transparent as possible. There is an inbuilt expectation that the Center takes a responsibility to invest in outcome documentation. Outcome documentation requires resources and Centers cannot be expected to document all potential outcomes each year. It is important that Centers monitor the outcomes evenly across

their project portfolio. Including this aspect in the SC assessment criteria was not practicable. However, EPMRs can track the spread of outcomes across the portfolio. Within the cycle of EPMRs the Center should cover its entire portfolio evenly.

The meeting noted that the External System Review was critical of the performance indicator for outcomes mainly on the basis of the “cherry picking” of the 5 best by each Center. This is somewhat true for the introductory phase of using the indicator but it is assumed that once the Center have picked all of their low hanging fruits they will then be reporting on carefully targeted outcomes where they have facilitated the outcome and where they have documented the change and the links to the research outputs. SPME felt that the external Review comment applied only at the initial stages of using the indicator and in addition there was no suggestion of a better indicator except to suggest that the PMS ought to be done by “external” evaluators.

Following the feed-back from Centers it was recommended at the PMS workshop and agreed by SPME that for Outcome statements that are judged to receive a score of 0 at initial screening, the Center should be alerted and it could submit an alternative outcome case. The instructions to Centers need to be more specific about the evidence, which should consist of brief and directly relevant evidence material in a global language. Also the time of achieving the output that led to the outcome should be limited to 5 years. SPME will revise its instructions to the SC on scoring considering the experience from this year.

In consultation with SPIA, SPME has been working on guidelines for the use of the PMS. The guidelines were discussed during a brief joint session of the two Standing panels. Following a decision at the PMS workshop, the guidelines will be finalised in collaboration with the CGIAR Secretariat and the ADE.

SPME action:

- SPME will draft changes to the PMS Instructions to be discussed with ADE
- SPME will finalise the new PMS guidelines to users in collaboration with SPIA and seek input from the CGIAR Secretariat and the Alliance before the document is finalised.
- Testable indicators for capacity building will be drafted and the proposed indicator will be discussed with ADE
- SPME will improve the criteria and scoring process of the outcome indicator.

b) Challenge Program performance

SPME discussed the request by ExCo to develop an appropriate PM system for the Challenge Programs. SPME again reaffirmed the earlier SC decision that it would be inappropriate to simply use the Center PMS system for the CPs arguing that a M&E system for the CP should take into account the special characteristics of the CPs which are dynamic and evolve through subsequent phases of exploration and partnership building, research and delivery of outputs to a final stage of proof of concept testing and mainstreaming; that the CPs are subject to *ex ante* evaluation at the selection stage and often include competitive research grants that also involve peer review; that the CP MTPs are assessed by the SC and that the programs already report annually on progress directly to ExCo. In additions an external review (CPER) is conducted every 4-5 years.

The SPME discussion focused on an appropriate M&E system for CPs, which should be flexible to reflect the appropriate phase of the CP. It should comprise of a) monitoring by the

CP management—and under the oversight of the board—of a set of key performance indicators designed to match the evolutionary phase of the program and that benchmark annual progress in the program according to plans (with report to ExCo); and b) an external peer-review (CPER) that is matched to the CP cycle. The CPERs currently seem to be timed too late to be helpful for early corrective measures of focus and direction. For example, the SSA-CP had benefited from an early review timed at the end of the program's inception phase. In general, all CPs have been found to need a better focus, and an intervention earlier in the CP's life cycle would guide the needed direction on time. It was suggested that the CPERs could be carried out simultaneously with appropriate program meeting so as to allow better interaction with program scientists, partners and stakeholders and reduce the monitoring costs.

SPME was pleased to hear from the EC representative that the EC is reconstructing its own M&E process and requirements in order to bring it closer to the CGIAR processes and to rationalise the reviewing and reporting requirements. SPME also heard that the MTPs had been found useful by the EC.

SPME action:

- SPME will prepare a draft note on the principles of developing a M&E system for the Challenge Programs in collaboration with the CGIAR Secretariat that will be shared with the CP coordinators at the AGM meeting and finalised for ExCo16.

Item 6 On-going and planned review

a) Update on scheduled EPMRs

SPME Secretary gave an update on the current EPMRs: ICRISAT 6th EPMR has started and the IRRI 7th EPMR will begin in October. Both these EPMR reports will be present at SC11. Bioversity EPMR is at the final stages of planning and will begin in early 2009. CIMMYT has expressed a wish for its 6th EPMR to be started in late 2009, which SPME agreed with. The IFPRI 5th EPMR is scheduled for 2010.

b) Social Science Stripe Review

SPME secretary gave a brief update on progress on the review. The Phase 1 results of the review would be reported to the SC in plenary (item 5). Outside the SPME meeting a small task force discussed comments on the outputs from Phase 1 and next steps for implementing Phase 2. These comments will feed into the SC10 End-of-Meeting report, and the task force will continue to provide oversight to the review.

Item 7: Integration of the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation System

SPME concluded that there is need to wait till the results of the Change Management process are known before embarking on the practical implementation of many of the items that had been discussed earlier as part of SPME's M&E strategy. It was decided that a meeting with donors would be postponed to a later stage. However, SPME agreed that for information to the donors and the System it would prepare a note explaining how the components of the current M&E system come together in an integrated way.

SPME action

- SPME will prepare a narrative explaining the integrated M&E system for information to the donors and System.

Item 8 Improving External Program and Management Review (EPMR) process

Given that the on-going Change Management process will affect also the way M&E is conducted in the CGIAR, SPME decided to postpone planning changes into the EPMR process, for example regarding Panel structure and new guidelines. However, new measures to improve the comparability of the EPMR reports can be adopted and they should include harmonization of data collection from Centres and presentation of data in the EPMR reports aiming at data and analysis that can be tracked from one EPMR to another for each Center and across Centers. Another objective of requesting Centers to pre-prepare materials for EPMRs is to avoid EPMR members becoming overwhelmed with massive documentation.

Item 9: Other business

There was not other business.

Appendixes:

- Appendix 1. PowerPoint presentation of the SPME report to the SC
- Appendix 2. Feedback from the SC discussion on the SPME report:

Appendix 1. PowerPoint presentation of the SPME report to the SC10

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SPME Report to SC 10

September 2008

Ken Faucher
Osvaldo Feinstein
Paul Visk
supported by Sirkka Inmonen

Why MTPs and why review them?

SC tasked to enhance quality and relevance of science in CGIAR

The MTP, including the logframes, is the central element in the planning of research relevant to the priorities of the CGIAR and for monitoring progress to meet the CGIAR goals.

The Science Council (SC) reviews the plans for

- * programmatic content and relevance,
- * programme changes in response to FPMS,
- * opportunities for synergies among centers and
- * clarity in planning and monitoring

MTPs –some positive observations

SC commentary was provided to the centers as a means to upgrade the quality of the MTPs

There has been a positive change in the focus and relevance of research since SC began reading and commenting on the MTPs in 2004

MTPs provide an "accounting" of the planned outputs by priorities thus allowing for an overview of the relative effort among the priorities

Some centers appear to use the MTP as their main research management tool; MTP output targets are the basis for self monitoring of achievements

Good taking of changes in responses to EPMR recommendations

MTPs - problems remain

Far too long, generic and repetitive

In many MTPs there is a lack of priority setting and focus and a natural inclination of trying to do too much.

The "accounting" of contribution to the priorities does not mean there is a cohesive program at system level

The linear nature of logframe structure continues to present difficulty in dealing with the more complex, highly interactive programmes

In these need to continue to monitor the IPC nature of potential outcomes from a number of complex programs where there are no clearly defined pathways

MTPs recommendations

-There is clearly a broad range of quality amongst the present MTPs as a planning and monitoring tool

Aim of SC: a set of relevant MTPs of a quality that can provide good planning and monitoring

-Many centers and CPs now have such a plan. We aim to review these every 3 years and when there are major changes such as those from an EPMR.

-Meanwhile we plan to continue to work with the remaining Centers to help them develop an adequate Plan.

*SC to approve the commentary and the summary recommendation for each Center/CP to be forwarded to centers

*SC to approve the Overall MTP commentary on MTPs to be presented at ExCO

SPME AGENDA SC10

• Process for assessment of MTPs and Strategic Plans in 2008

• Performance measurement

- Changes to PMS for center
- Guidelines for PMS
- PMS for CP

• On going and planned EPMRs of Centers

• Updated Integrated M&F Strategy

- Updating Guidelines for EPMR s

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MTP process

- Increasing number of quality MTPs – review every three years and after EPMRs
- Sharing “good” MTPs among Centers may help bring the remaining Centers along
- This year most Centers submitted MTP on-line through LatsyMTP
- MTPs have multiple uses to Centers – examine “targeted access” and restricted words to reduce size.
- Achievement of output targets now reported in COMap
- SPME recommends that the MTP narrative will contain summary of output target achievement (from COMap) to provide information on past achievement so as to assist review of future plans
- Care for minimum change to Guidelines

SC commentary on Strategic Plans

- Criteria for SC commentary on Strategic plans endorsed by SC earlier in 2008– focus is on relevance to system priorities
- Two pilot commentaries– CIFOR and ICRAF
- Observations for improvement based on the pilots
 - All SC members to read the strategic plan in order to comment and sign off on the SC
 - Only Comments on the agreed criteria on public record
 - Comments additional to criteria forwarded to Centers as information only
- *The SC Chair will forward the notes on the purpose of the SC commentaries, the Guidelines and the Pilot cases to the Alliance Chairs for feedback and discussion at AGM*
- SC formalize process with DRCG

Performance Measurement system

- Joint July PMS workshop agreed:
 - Output target achievement monitored by Centers and removed from PMS
 - Output indicators:
 - Publications indicator (composite of Thomson Index, all other peer reviewed journals, and)
 - Publications to include registered cultivars
 - Indicator for capacity building/training to be tested
 - Indicator for management of data as IPG to be tested
 - Outcome indicator
 - # of cases to be patented depends on Center size
 - Guidelines for use of PMS developed by SPMF and SPIA jointly with Alliance and CGIAR Secretariat

PMS Component I. Research Related Indicators (as agreed from Workshop)

- Element 1: Outputs
 - Indicator 1: Composite Publications of:
 - Thomson Journal/Articles
 - All OTHFR peer reviewed publications
 - Publishing in high impact journals
 - Registered cultivars included in publications
 - Indicator 2: Capacity building (being developed with ATRs)
 - Indicator 3: Patents (being developed with ATRs)
- Element 2: Outcome
 - SC assessment of outcome cases submitted by Center, # adjusted for size of center
- Element 3: Impact (see SPIA)
- Guidelines on use of the PMS to be developed

Rationale for components of the publication output

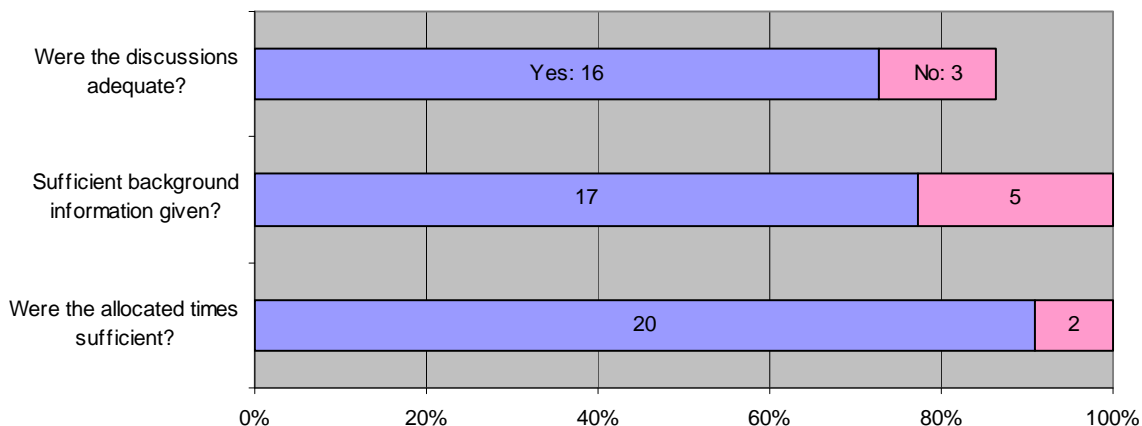
- Thomson Journal Articles – reflects the productivity and publishing quality of the Center as a provider of research knowledge that has wide use and that meets international peer standards as established by an internationally recognized journal database. The database also includes open access journals. The sub-indicator is a measure of the standing of the CGIAR system among peer scientists.

Rationale for components of the publication output

- All OTHFR peer reviewed publications – This indicator includes peer reviewed publications including journals (not included in Thomson) with international, regional and national audiences, books and conference proceedings. It recognizes (i) the wide target audience of the CGIAR research and (ii) forms of publication other than journals provided that the material is peer reviewed. It does not encourage dissemination of research results in non-peer reviewed literature.
- Combined, the sub-indicators a and b recognise all peer reviewed publications.

Appendix 2. Feedback from the SC discussion on the SPME-led Items

Agenda Item 3. Review of Medium Term Plans: The new “time-efficient” mode of this agenda item seems to have gained more acceptance than in SC8. In the comments, however, concerns were raised about the brevity, which risked appearing to dismiss the work of the Centers in preparing the MTPs. It was suggested that the commentary be structured around a limited number of strategic issues, that it should be less preachy but should engage the Centers more, and that a more consistent review process should be applied across the MTPs to allow cross-Center and Systemwide analyses.



Agenda Item 4. Standing Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation (SPME): Generally positive, with significant number of respondents who felt that there were insufficient background documents (28%).

