

**Report of the 2nd Meeting of the
Standing Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation (SPME)
7 September 2004 FAO, Rome, Italy**

Attending:

Ken Fischer, Chair, SPME
Richard Harwood, SPME
Leslie Cooksy, SPME
Beatriz del Rosario, SPME
Per Pinstrup-Andersen, SC
Hans Gregersen, SPIA
Ruben Echeverria, SC Secretariat
Sirkka Immonen, Secretary, SC Secretariat
Tim Kelley, SC Secretariat
David Reitzer, SC Secretariat

Observers (open session):

Elliot Stern, Tavistock Institute, UK (Chair of training study)
Frank Rijsbergman, IWMI
Jonathan Woolley, Water & Food Challenge Program
Jamie Watts, IPGRI
Adel el Beltagy, ICARDA

Item 1: Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair opened the Standing Panel Meeting by introducing the two new members, Drs. Leslie Cooksy and Beatriz (Betty) del Rosario and welcoming all participants. Vir Chopra was unable to attend due to health reasons.

Item 2: Review and Adoption of the Agenda

The SPME meeting agenda was reviewed. There were two items from the SPIA agenda that were of interest for SPME, namely Impact Assessment of participatory research and a study on donor demands. In addition, the Institutional Learning and Change programme (ILAC) was to be discussed under Other Business. The joint SPIA/SPME study on training was scheduled till after lunch. The Chair mentioned that SPME would monitor its activities through a monthly follow-up table.

Item 3: External Programme and Management Reviews

a) 5th IFPRI EPMR

SPME Secretary Sirkka Immonen gave a brief update on the progress in implementing the 5th EPMR of IFPRI. The Chair is Bruce Gardner, interim Dean, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and Professor of Agricultural Economics, University of Maryland. Other Panel members are Dunstan Spencer from Sierra Leone, Peter Svedberg from Sweden, Alberto Valdes from Chile, LinXiu Zhang from China, Louis Paul from India, and Jan Masaoka, a consultant on governance from USA as. Tim Kelley is the Panel secretary and SC Secretariat resource person to the EPMR. The Initial Phase of the EPMR will take place from

1-7 October 2004, and the main phase will be 25 Jan – 5 Feb 2005 prior to IFPRI's regular Board meeting. Some field visits will take place between October and December.

Richard Harwood explained to the Standing Panel the special process to build a “firewall” that was followed with this particular EPMPR to avoid any perception of conflict regarding the SC Chair and his old institution being reviewed. In this EPMPR, the SPME Chair acted on behalf of the SC Chair in all processes that required SC Chair's involvement.

Sirkka Immonen also explained briefly the recent changes in conducting EPMPR, which involved less time spent at the Centre and more virtual work in preparing the report. Also the Centres were requested to prepare documentation on strategy and vision, achievements and outputs and staff quality specifically for the review, in addition to providing a number of standard documents.

5th CIMMYT EPMPR

Sirkka Immonen, the CIMMYT EPMPR Secretary, updated the meeting on progress in planning and implementing the 5th CIMMYT EPMPR. Don Marshall Professor Emeritus, Plant Breeding Solutions PTY LTD, Australia, will chair the review and serve for the wheat breeding slot. Panel members from a SC approved short list are being approached for five additional slots: maize breeding and biotechnology, natural resource management, economics, governance, management and finance. CIMMYT will hold a Board meeting on 23-24 October. The Initial Phase of the EPMPR will take place from 22-27 November 2004 and the Main phase on 14-25 February 2005 prior to CIMMYT's regular Board meeting to be held 14-18 March 2005. It is expected that some field visits will be undertaken between December and February.

CIMMYT has conducted three Centre Commissioned External Reviews (CCERs) since the 4th EPMPR. The Centre is also undertaking a number of other studies. SPME member, Leslie Cooksy is conducting an impact study for CIMMYT on training. She will collaborate with the SPIA/SPME study as far as implementation and results are concerned.

The SC discussed specific issues to be addressed in the review. The list was published in the SC1 meeting minutes and brought to CIMMYT's attention. The negotiations facilitated by the Rockefeller Foundation to consider an alliance between IRRI and CIMMYT will be one important issue affecting the review.

EPMPRs of CIFOR, World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and WorldFish Centre

SC has commissioned the 2nd EPMPR of CIFOR, the 3rd EPMPRs of ICRAF and WorldFish Centre. The DGs have been informed and requested to provide names of potential Chair candidates, dates of important event affecting the EPMPR and information on CCERs conducted or planned before the EPMPR.

The Standing Panel discussed the possibility to join the EPMPRs of CIFOR and ICRAF. The SPME Chair considered that there were options: 1) conduct a completely joint EPMPR for efficiency, 2) consider elements of similar nature in the Centre portfolios, and 3) run completely separate EPMPRs. It was felt that a joint EPMPR would send a strong message of merger being considered for these two Centres and this was not the SC's intention. Furthermore, the Centres were paying for the review and planning was already well on the

way. The Centres have closed contacts and they have been exchanging Board members. The SPME saw value in looking at common elements and subsequently decided to look for one common Panel member for these two EPMRs to add value to the reviews. However, this should not be the Chair.

Action:

- 1) Collect recommendations for Chairs for the review of each Centre
- 2) Collect recommendations for one panel member that could be common to CIFOR and ICRAF reviews
- 3) Identify specific issues to be addressed by the review teams

Future EPMRs

SC has commissioned the 3rd EPMR of IWMI to be started in 2006. Two other EPMRs are scheduled for 2006, namely ICARDA's 5th and ILRI's 2nd. The Standing Panel decided to recommend to SC that these be commissioned.

The Chair made a plea for SPME to suggest new names of potential reviewers. The SPME Secretary will follow-up by requesting nominees. The Panel selection of the three EPMS to be started in 2005 will be handled virtually.

The process of streamlining EPMRs is going on (Agenda Item 6). However until the new proposed monitoring and evaluation system is agreed and in place, the 2005 and 2006 EPMRs will be conducted under present guidelines.

Action:

- 1) Begin enhancing the database for potential reviewers

Item 4: Systemwide Programme Reviews

There has been progress in the implementation of the external review of the Systemwide Programme on Alternatives to Slash and Burn (ASB). Dr. William Clarke, Harvey Brooks Professor of International Science, Public Policy and Human Development from Harvard University, USA will Chair the review. SPME and SPIA members discussed the short list of panel candidates in a closed session after the SPME meeting. The two slots considered are: 1) economics, impact assessment and allied social science, and 2) forestry/ agroforestry, land use systems and conservation ecology. The ASB global steering group meeting will be held in Bogor in early December. Following the meeting some field visits in Indonesia and possibly Thailand, where ASB field projects are underway, will be undertaken. It was suggested that Betty del Rosario could attend some part of the review mission in Asia.

SPME decision on the review of the Systemwide Programme on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis (PRGA) depends on the preliminary inventory study planned by SPIA. The Standing Panel did not discuss the review of the Systemwide Soil Water and Nutrient Management Programme (SWNM).

Action:

- 1) Discuss and decide the need for the continuation of the review of all System Wide Programs and the need for a "meta" analysis of the System programs as a whole. The latter will be useful if timed for the "implementation" of the new Priorities.

Item 5: Stripe Reviews

Elliot Stern, the Chair of the panel conducting the study *Training Evaluation and Impact Assessment in the CGIAR* briefed the meeting about progress in planning and implementation. The goal of the study as defined by the panel is to “assess how far and in what ways the CGIAR System (and its Centres) can best provide training (based on scientific research) that strengthens NARS’ capacity to undertake collaborative scientific research to realize CGIAR goals”. This is a multi-level theory led study, both prospective and retrospective that hopes to actively engage stakeholders to make follow-up and take-up of results more likely, and develop methodologies and data collection systems that can be used by Centres on the future. The main study will use literature reviews, questionnaires surveys and NARS and Centre interviews as main tools. The fieldwork will focus on 7-8 countries where CGIAR training intensity has been highest with multi-Centre presence, and are contrasting regarding development, capacity strength and prevalence of poverty. The aspects of quality, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of training and learning are addressed through different models. The study is looking at learning in different contexts: transmissive, integrated, incidental and collaborative. The building blocks of a normative model that is to be used in the evaluation include the elements of learning objectives, learning characteristics, learning, settings, learning processes, use contexts, and learning outcomes. Capacity development is assessed at three levels: individual capacities and skills, Institutional capacities, resources and managements, Inter-institutional coordination and networking.

Questions were raised about the frameworks within which research can be planned, which are signs of capacity, such as networks. It is unlikely that the study can provide evidence beyond anecdotal about impacts of training in the ultimate CGIAR goals. However, it will go beyond the individual level to analyse organisational and inter-organisational levels. CGIAR has been constantly present in some countries over a long time, which might allow analysis of the parallel evolution and CGIAR influence. There is a movement away from focusing individuals to integrated methods of training to make it more effective. When the CGIAR is the important actor and there are no others, it may be easier to tease out impacts from training than when the CGIAR resources are limited and the recipient resources are not completely absent. ICARDA DG raise the point that often trainee selection is not optimal as training is used as a reward and the young persons in the need for training and most suitable to receive it are not given the change. Even in such cases the Centre cannot abandon the programme but must adjust themselves. Capacity includes that the NARS can retain skills and have human resource support in place.

Item 6: Evaluation Processes in the CGIAR

The Standing Panel discussed the revised draft of an earlier iSC document: *Changing Monitoring and Evaluation in the CGIAR System*. This document had been substantially revised and renamed: *A Proposal for a New Monitoring and Evaluation Process of CGIAR Centres*. The process to develop a proposal for revising the monitoring and evaluation of Centres has been a very long one, as TAC discussed the first version of the document already in 2001. The two main changes suggested also in the current document are: increased Board involvement and responsibility in oversight of monitoring and evaluating all Centre activities, and greater use of self-assessment including rigorous CCERs to replace some of the retrospective evaluation of the EPMR. The current document reflects the recent relevant developments in the CGIAR, i.e. the development of system priorities and a performance

measurement (PM) process. It describes the process from priority setting through Medium-Term planning and SC approval of targets to self-assessment of performance and ultimately external review to audit the processes, validate their conclusions and provide strategic assessment of the future. It was imperative that the different review processes became complementary and not duplicative. The paper was considered clear and sensible. It was suggested that the transition period be explained more explicitly and linkages between the different processes, including the PM data assembly, be clarified. Operationalization will need to take place next. The Standing Panel considered the paper consistent with all related developments and decided to recommend to the SC to move forward with this proposal document.

IPGRI observer noted that the process described in the paper matches with the Centres steps to move forward. Development of ToR for the various reviews is a key dimension. She suggested that capacity building needs be considered to develop the Board role and clarify the CCER process. Self-assessment should not become a white wash. IWMI observer emphasised the importance of linking strategic planning to monitoring and evaluation, which will come about from developing system priorities, establishing goals for research and linking monitoring and evaluation to that process.

As a related topic, the members discussed tracking of the EPMRs, as they were such a large investment to the Centres. Recently two Centres had submitted tables to ExCo on EPMR follow-up, but the Committee had no means of dealing with the information. The SC should set up a process for monitoring EPMR follow-up which previously has not been consistently done.

Action:

- 1) Endorse the New Monitoring and Evaluation to the SC for presenting to the AGM in Mexico

Item 7: Science Tracking and Medium-Term Plans

The MTP of the Centres including the system wide programmes were read and evaluated by SC members. The SPME members had been asked to read all of the SC comments by email. The SPME members did not have adequate time to discuss the individual Centre MTPs, commentaries at their meeting. Dick Harwood prepared an overview of the MTP commentaries, The draft commentaries of each Center and the overview commentary were tabled at the SC meeting in plenary under Item 4 a.

The individual commentaries will be sent to the Centres, inviting the Centres to make their comments, and both the SC and Centre comments on the MTP will be made available to the members at the AGM. The SPME believes that this is a fair and transparent system of commentary.

The SPME members noted large variations among the Centres in the quality of the log frames in terms of monitoring progress. The SPME noted the importance of the MTP as a mechanism for describing the relevance of the research agenda and in the use of appropriate milestones to verify the rate of progress. The new PM system, now being developed will increasingly use the MTP as the instrument for monitoring the quality of the science.

Leslie will examine a few current MTP's and their use in the PM and from that analysis develop and refine new guidelines for the MTP. However these new Guidelines will not be issued until the new Priorities have been developed so that the complete package—new priorities, new MTP guidelines and PM system can be put in place. Further development of guidelines for and criteria of assessing the MTPs is linked to the performance measurement process that is being developed.

Action:

- 1) Individual centre commentaries provided to the SC for final comment
- 2) Dick Harwood to develop the MTP overview
- 3) Leslie to develop “case studies” of MTO from which new guidelines can be developed.

Item 8: Challenge Programmers

The Standing Panel Chair explained that the assessment of CP MTPs had three objectives: a) to provide a commentary and feedback on MTPs as part of the overall MTP and CGIAR research agenda assessment, which for the CPs includes assessment of progress and programme content; 2) consider formal recommendation to ExCo on whether the Generation CP should continue; and 3) draw lessons learnt to advice ExCo and the Group on experiences from the CP process so far.

Early draft commentaries containing SC member assessments of the CP MTPs were distributed as background. The discussion was also use to draw issues for the lessons learn paper, for which a draft was not yet available. Dick Harwood noted that a major change had taken place this year in the MTPs, which had been requested from Centre programmes, systemwide programmes (as part of convening Centre's MTP) and CPs. There was still lack of connectivity in the MTPs, but the definition of targets, including annual milestones was much improved.

A problem observed particularly with the Water and Food CP is use of competitive bidding for setting priorities. This CP has invested a lot in forming partnerships and running a competitive grants scheme, without clear priorities within which the priorities and partnerships were defined. Opening up has not helped identify new priorities and competitive proposal cannot be evaluated in the light of priorities, as there absence. It was difficult to know how the added value from this CP could be recognized. Partnerships are a necessary requirement but not a sufficient goal in themselves to a CP. SC has some concern of the role of the partners in this CP. It will take a long time to build bridges between the partners.

SC is seeking to find focus on the science-based parts of the programme, clearly defined for themes and basins that would lead to global products. A question was raised as to how many of the activities were component pieces not taking the interactive pieces. How would these pieces lead to impact at the basin level? The CPs MTP focuses around the themes, where as the interactive nature of the work is to be found at the basins. However, projects haven't specified the outputs that are relevant for the themes and this ought to be done with partners. The IPG nature of the work can be realized at the transects of the basins which have global nature and use. More focus is in general needed on the science base of this challenge, as science is the CGIAR's core comparative advantage. The social science element is quite strong in most themes.

The main goals for CPs of new research for new knowledge, opening up through new partnerships and leveraging new funding are to some extent impossible to combine. Which one of them is overriding in this CP? A new paradigm requires a vision and substance for connecting the vision to outcomes; Commonalities across the basins need to be seen. Building from bottom up will only create pieces, unless coherence is established, this “creative anarchy” could go on forever.

The representatives of Water and Food CP commented briefly on the observations made stating that the debate was long overdue. The observation “it isn’t very clear” is because the challenge is very complex. The challenge is broader than in the other CPs, which may be the characteristic of INRM. The really new ideas are expected to come through the partnerships and the interaction brings about the new products. It represents a paradigm shift in water and food research. The governance structure of the CP was designed for sharing power. It was established as a Joint Venture. The Steering Committee takes real decisions and not just acts as an advisory board. IWMI is providing intellectual leadership. But the nature of the partnerships must change and more responsibility must be given to NARS. Regarding priorities, the CP believes it has some broad ones; both for themes and for basins. The basin priorities represent regional priorities, an approach which previously has failed miserably. However, time is needed for those involved at basins to set priorities. The CO intends to conduct a gap analysis which should bring more coherence. The water productivity focus must be made very visible. The CP welcomes better communication with the SC on the quality of the science in the CP. The CP has set up its own 4 person scientific advisory committee and made the suggestion that the SC might want to access experts from that panel for its own reviewing purposes. The SC will examine how to add greater expertise in the area of water science.

Harvest Plus is moving well and there are no major worries. It has shown progress in genomics and breeding areas but been slower in getting the social science and nutrition started. It is not yet visible what is going on in these areas. The CP’s nutritional studies must be done locally and competitive process may not be optimal for conducting such research. The CP must be completely transparent on its GMO work.

Generation CP has gone through an introductory period as is on track, but needs to decide on how much of effort is focused on drought and what research needs to be centralized or outsourced. The genomic platform would seem the most valuable planned outcome, and drought is a proof of concept, but a highly complex one. There may be temptation to have several foci. It seems that NARS voice is missing from the CP decision-making. It has had good exposure among ARIs and academia. The in-kind contribution analysis is very positive. The programme has very ambitious goals. Its milestones for Programme 5 for capacity building are very weak. The CP has had a lot of pressure to expand from outside the programme. It will be a challenge to keep the partners interest while keeping the focus. The programme does not have clear priority setting to guide the competitive grants scheme. Although reasonable guidelines have been drawn for calling the proposals, the director and steering committee need to establish and keep the focus during the competitive process. There is also need to delineate what the CP does as what Centre programmes do. Is there duplication in network development? Boundaries are currently unclear. SPME supported recommending to ExCo that the CP would continue.

As general comment on lessons learnt from the CP the nature of the programme should determine how much money goes to competitive bidding. Balance is needed between clear

focus and encouragement of innovation among partners. Another concern is the apparent duplication in management and governance, which has led to high transaction costs. In building new institutional models transaction costs can be considered an investment, although their justification in supporting new agendas is analyzable only in the long run. All three CPs have built a complicated system of committees, task forces and other such governance bodies. The SC Chair emphasized that the figures reported obviously do not include regular overhead, but are solely deriving from the different processes to establish management and governance structures and partnerships. He urged the SC to take a position in this aspect of CPs. CPs were set to produce from time bound deliverables and they should not depart from that goal. A general concern is whether the multiple goals set for CPs are internally compatible? What are the conditions for competitive bidding? The participatory processes need to be assessed following clear criteria.

Action:

- 1) The SPME recommends to the SC for the continuation of the CP Generation.
- 2) Ken to develop the lessons Learnt paper based on the discussion particularly with respect to the importance of partnerships, and from the SC commentary of the three CP MTPs
- 3) The SPME to forward to the SC the commentary on the individual CP MTP.

Item 9: Reflection on the SPME and its Contribution to the SC

Time did not allow discussion of this agenda item.

Item 10: Other Business

ILA, Institutional Learning and Change

Jamie Watts highlighted the important elements of the ILAC concept that would be of common interest for the SC and SPME. Some US \$ 350 000 are available for the ILAC project, which originates from SPIA/IFPRI work on poverty impact studies. The project reconsiders the processes for impact. The traditional *ex post* IA does not have a connection with planning. ILAC promotes processes that stimulate innovation, learning and change. The IPGRI provides leadership to this inter-institutional initiative. ILAC has collaborated with the ICT-KM project to combine knowledge sharing. The project has chosen an SAHR study to benchmark HR processes and practices that promote innovation. It has organised a training workshop in facilitating skills, team management, and decision-making process. Furthermore mini case studies are arranged with ICRISAT and CIAT on adoption through participatory methods; and with CIMMYT on strategic planning and adoption in a move towards being poverty focused and human centred. A paper is being prepared about bringing learning elements to the CCERs. ILAC promotes holistic approach to capacity building, participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge sharing. ILAC will establish an innovation fund for competitive grants to provide funding for the kind of activities it promotes. ILAC asks, whether donors can stimulate innovation; can donors be drivers of change? IFAD and IDRC are interested. ILAC wants to stimulate communities of practices and sharing.

Dick Harwood commented on the initiative and recommended that ILAC should not underestimate the need of bench scientists, whom often are very isolated. They often do not understand the culture of their own Centres. He asked whether CDCD and CBC have

endorsed the ILAC project and concepts. The Science Council cannot assume an active role in this project, but is will follow the development as an internal Centre initiative contributing to monitoring and evaluation.