

6th Meeting of the Standing Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation (SPME)

CIAT, Cali: 9 September 9:00-17:00

Proceedings

Present:

SPME

Ken Fischer, Chair

Vir Chopra

Paul Vlek

Oswaldo Feinstein

Sirkka Immonen, Secretary

Observers:

Namita Datta

Item 1: Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all to the SPME meeting, and in particular the two new Panel members, Oswaldo Feinstein and Paul Vlek and the colleagues from the CGIAR Secretariat (Namita Datta and Manuel Lantin).

The Chair formally thanked the two past SPME members – Beatriz del Rosario and Leslie Cooksy – for their contribution to SPME.

Item 2: Review and Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was agreed upon. The need of a stripe study on the capacity of social/economic research across the system was added under other business. Agenda item 7 on MTPs was scheduled for joint discussion with SPIA.

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

The minutes of the 5th SPME meeting were acknowledged. It was decided that the pending issues from SPME 5 would be discussed in connection with the corresponding agenda items.

Item 4: Implementing the new M&E process

The Chair introduced the background document, *Monitoring and Evaluation System for the CGIAR Centers*, and its intention. SC had set itself a timeframe for implementing the new M&E System by 2007. Among a number of changes, one was to give an increasing role to the CCERs as independent evaluations of components of the Center operations. In addition to CCERs, the new M&E process is now using the MTP evaluation done by the SC and the PM system both providing annual data and information on relevance of science, The MTP is also used to track the changes made in response to the EPMR which should improve the effectiveness of the M&E process.

SPME discussed the benefits of asking Boards to play a greater role in the conducting of CCERs. In accordance with the new M&E process, Boards are asked to take a role in

conducting the CCERs and the Centres are asked to provide their plan of the CCERs as part of the EPMR process. It is not certain however whether Boards have increased their buy-in to this process, in particular by adjusting the CCERs to feed as building blocks into EPMRs. At the moment the Board's have a varying role in the organisation of CCERs from fully controlling the process to simply endorsing Management's suggestions.

SPME agreed that while Board oversight is necessary for all self-evaluation, including CCERs, it is not possible to reinforce the independent nature of the CCERs. Thus it was decided that the CCERs should be used by the Center to strengthen the self-assessment and learning culture. SPME noted the importance of maintaining a clear delineation between self-evaluation and independent external evaluation, where the EPMRs examine that self-assessment capacity. Thus SPME agreed that the idea of changing the EPMRs by relying on CCERs as independent building blocks as the main change in the M&E process may not be feasible and the concept that relies heavily on the CCER may not help. Nevertheless, the CCERs should be used by the EPMR Panels when appropriate, and the EPMRs' should not duplicate assessment included in a good quality CCER.

In discussing ways to continue to improve the EPMR process one would be to ask Centres provide more processed information to the Panel, such as a SWOT analysis allowing panels to better focus their time and effort.

One obvious area for improving efficiencies remains and that is in maximising the multiple use of the EPMR thereby reducing the need for specific reviews by each donor/investor. The SPME currently attempts to bring together all known information from such reviews as part of the EPMR preparation. SPME also feels that the funding mechanism of EPMRs should be changed. The SPME encourages the SC and ExCo to explore all ideas to further improve the efficiency of the EPMRs by building early ownership of the System's donors such that the outcome can serve multiple interests.

It is important for SPME to assess if the new M&E process (with the changes mentioned above) improves the quality of the review process. SPME decided to undertake two studies to examine the efficiency of the EPMR process.

- Study 1 would respond to the ExCO request for a meta study of recent EPMR to identify best practice, common approaches and some common trends and outcomes. This study would be conducted in 2006-2007.
- Study 2 would be a more detailed peer review of the EPMR process. It would examine the present process, assess if there have been gains in efficiency and provide new recommendations for conducting M&E by the SPME and the SC. The aim would be to i) make the reports more uniform regarding their quality; and ii) reduce the cost of the reviews by streamlining the process. This study would be conducted in 2008 after the relatively large number of EPMR that are being conducted in 2007.

Action for SPME

- Organise with the CG Sec a formal meta-study of best practices for the EPMRs in 2006/7 to guide their implementation. The ToR to be developed electronically for approval and implementation at the SC 7 and for reporting at SC 8.
- SPME to budget for a fuller Peer review of the EPMR process in 2008. The ToR will be developed at SC 8 and will benefit from Study 1.

Item 5: External Programme and Management Reviews

a) on-going EPMRs

SPME Secretary updated SPME on the progress of organising on-going EPMRs. The 2nd EPMR of ILRI and the 3rd EPMR of IWMI will be completed in October-November 2006. She noted that this is not optimal because the process of reporting of the findings to the AGM will have to wait until AGM 2007. This is too long after the main phase of the EPMR. The timing must be more carefully planned for future EPMRs.

SPME discussed improving the involvement of the *ad hoc* teams in the preparation, which may require more active approach from the SC Secretariat. Regarding expanding the pool of highly qualified candidates with diverse backgrounds, the SC and the *ad hoc* teams should work more to get good experts to Panels. SPME should think of new ways to expand the pool to increase the diversity in gender, geographic background and skills.

b) EPMRs being planned

The EPMRs of WARDA, CIAT, IITA and CIP are being planned, WARDA being furthest in planning.

The following *ad hoc* teams are involved/proposed:

WARDA: Onesmo ole-Moi-Yoi, Paul Vlek, Ken Fischer, Beatriz Avalos-Sartorio;

CIAT: Mariza Barbosa, Walter Baethgen, Ken Fischer, Ruben Echeverría;

IITA: Mike Gale, Mywish Maredia, Ken Fischer, Peter Gardiner;

CIP: Vir Chopra, Rey Martorel, Ken Fischer, Panel Secretary.

SPME ALSO reviewed the 5 year rolling plan for EPMRs.

The *ad hoc* teams are preparing a draft list of strategic issues for the SC to endorse. The lists of issues will be circulated electronically after the SC meeting.

Action by SPME

- Provide to the SC the list of strategic issues for WARDA, CIAT, IITA and CIP EPMRs for virtual endorsement.

c) Challenge Programs External Reviews (CPEP)

The first 3 CPs (Water & Food, Harvest Plus and Generation) are to be reviewed in 2007-2008. These reviews fit in the funding cycle of the CPs. There is a need to develop a) appropriate Term of Reference and Guidelines for the review of the CPs and b) a time table for the review of the 3 ongoing CPs.

Developing Terms of Reference and Guidelines

The external review process of the CPs needs to be consistent with the new M&E policy and appropriate for the specific needs and characteristics of CPs - it is not just an extension of the EPMR process now used for the Centers.

A draft guidelines paper [Challenge Programs External Reviews (CPER) - Terms of Reference (TOR) and Guidelines] was developed for the SPME meeting by Osvaldo Feinstein drawing from a discussion paper provided by the CG Sec. The draft TOR presented for discussion identified the important evaluation questions, presented alternative approaches and included specific steps of conducting the reviews in the guidelines. The three key characteristics of CPs were considered to be: i) being time-bound; ii) being expected to add value from synergy; and iii) drawing from expertise from outside the CGIAR through different kinds of partnerships. Because the CPs are intended to be time-bound, they need to be reviewed at the end of their funding period, in order to allow decision making about their continuous funding or bringing them to completion either because the challenge has been solved, because the work can be devolved to the NARS, or because there are compelling reasons to wrap up the research. The last mentioned may be an option in some cases even if the original challenge had not been completely met. The review should therefore consider the basis on which the program was approved and the realistic timeframe within which it can be expected to address the first generation of challenges. The first CP evaluations also need to be seen as part of a learning process, which needs to be considered in the design of the core TOR and Guidelines and in selecting the review teams.

One suggestion raised in the CGIAR Secretariat discussion paper was to outsource the CPERs. SPME members questioned the cost-saving argument as this has generally not been the experience with institution-run reviews. On one hand outsourced reviews might be considered more credible than those organised by the SC and CGIAR Secretariat, but on the other hand involving institutes that mostly are consulting firms with an interest in getting other contracts would not increase the independence of the review and there would be very limited control of the Panels to consider, for instance, conflict of interest issues or diversity. It was considered that, ultimately, the clarity of the TOR and the composition of the Panel were the two most important factors influencing the quality of the review. SPME also felt that it would not be good to run an experiment of outsourcing with a CP as there was no experience of CP reviews within the CGIAR to compare this with.

Action by SPME

- Circulate the draft CPER TOR and Guidelines to the Science Council and the CGIAR Secretariat for comments and subsequently to the SC for endorsement
- The final document will be sent to ExCo for approval

Time table for the CP reviews

The SC Secretariat has been in contact with each CP coordinator to identify a time table to begin the reviews. As there is a request from the ExCo to have the CP review reports available for ExCo and CGIAR discussion already in 2007, all the reviews will need to be initiated as soon as the TOR and Guidelines have been approved at ExCo, and completed in time for SC 8 in September 2007.

Action by SPME

- Once TOR and Guidelines for the CPER are approved, SPME will suggest an ad hoc team for each review
- SC Secretariat will begin the organisation of the reviews jointly with the CGIAR Secretariat and in consultation with the CPs.

Item 6: Systemwide Programme Reviews including the Meta review of the System wide programs (SWEP)

a) Meta study of the Systemwide Programs

SPME Secretary updated the Panel about the study. The design has been somewhat changed in that the study involves a three-member Panel (instead of two), chaired by Seme Debele (Ethiopia) with Ian Bevage (Australia) and Paul Egger (Switzerland) as members and an external resource person, Elias Ponse (the Philippines). The study is conducted by the SC alone, although the TOR were shared with the Alliance Executive for comments. The final report will be submitted to the SC at the end of October.

b) External Review of the Systemwide Program: Participatory Research and Gender Analysis on-going EPMRs

SPME Secretary briefed the Panel on the external review of the Systemwide Program on Participatory research and Gender Analysis, the TOR of which has been developed in consultation with SPIA. The study includes a desk study of literature on *ex post* impact assessment of participatory research. This supplementary study was included in the PRGA review to look at methodological issues and challenges associated with participatory research in particular, and to gain knowledge of the evidence of impacts of participatory research in the CGIAR and outside. The study is chaired by Thomas Walker (USA), and members are Eva Rathgeber (Canada) and D.S. Dhillon (India).

Item 7: Medium-Term Plans

SPIA joined the SPME meeting for part of the time in discussing the MTP process. In the continual update of the process, SC had added a request in the Guidelines for 2006 for information on impact pathways to be added to the MTPs for 2007-2007. In general the centers have responded positively although there is still a need for more specificity to make the analysis useful. SPIA has been developing its thinking on impact pathways for *ex post* impact assessment and shared that with SPME. The aim is to continue to improve the guideline for this important information in the planning of the science in the MTPs. In the discussion that followed several suggestions were presented for SPIA to consider. These dealt with the level of detail in any impact pathway description; conditional factors to be included that are likely to influence the uptake; the role of adapters and non-adapters; the influence of the degree of adoption on differential impacts; inclusion of the exogenous factors; likely impediments of moving down the pathway and the Centers involvement as one moves down the pathway. Centres should be able to make more realistic predictions of impact by having done a better analysis of the pathway. It is important to know the point of departure and what has been done already.

SPME then discussed the quality of the MTP more generally as an effective tool for adding quality in the research conducted by the CGIAR system. There were mixed views – with some members hoping to get more details about research approach and points of departures in order to make a judgement on the quality of the MTP. One difficulty is to define exactly what the SC wishes to achieve from the MTPs. Clearly they are not designed for a level of detail that might be expected at the center program level (or by a granting agency). One achievement of the MTP would be that they are used by the Center for their own monitoring

of science and there are some encouraging signs that this is already happening; i.e. Centres are starting to make the MTP documents a part of their own planning and monitoring system.

Based on the points raised in the discussion, SPME will update the guidelines for the next year. This process began with the two new SPME members making an initial set of changes to the guidelines.

In general SPME concluded that there were three areas where improvement to the MTPs is needed:

1. MTP would not need much on achievements except in the context of the new plan.
2. There is need for presenting the project activities and hypothesis in the narrative.
3. Project rationales are too global and generic and should identify prior research that is influencing the current activities.

Action from SPME

- SPME members will look at the current Guidelines and make suggestions for their improvement. New guidelines will be finalised in December.
- SPME will meet with the Centers at a pre-AGM meeting organised by the Alliance Executive Deputy and this will give an opportunity to get feed-back from Centers.

Item 8: Performance Measurement

SPME discussed the implementation, verification and implications of the PM system and the current indicators. The SC has mainly been responsible for developing the Results indicators: outputs, outcomes and impact (specific SPIA responsibility).

The Output indicator requires that the output targets in the MTP are clearly defined. This indicator is a self-assessment one, and along with the improved understanding and clarity of the MTP targets, it will require less SC assessment. The main challenge is to avoid the moral hazard of the Centers setting “small” output targets in order to ensure maximum achievement. One area that requires more attention is the outputs associated with capacity strengthening – currently Centre do not always set explicit capacity targets related to the MTP Projects. Also there is a need for more clarity on if and what constitutes an output based on a partnership. SPME will continue to give feedback to the centers through the MTP process.

SPME considered that the criteria used for the evaluation of the Outcomes indicator need revision. Some of the current approaches were used in the pilot phase to give the ‘benefit of the doubt’ for some outcomes. In the future the score should not be accumulative. Furthermore, SPME needs to develop a scoring that differentiates outcomes that occur at different stages in the use and adoption.

The SC has also been involved in developing the Quality and Relevance of Current research indicators, which currently is based on publication records only. These need reviewing; the instructions for when to include a publication (i.e. after publication, not submission) should be very clear; and the measure of the “denominator” (by staff or \$ of project etc) should be unambiguous and appropriate for the different Centres.

The SC has also been asked to test an indicator based on the EPMP Panels’ assessment of Center quality (4D). It was felt that the indicator rating should consist of more elaborate assessment of different aspects of Center quality, importantly including the interdisciplinarity

of research. SPME will draw up a draft indicator and ask the current EPMR chairs to use in a pilot capacity.

Action from SPME

- SPME will further develop the EPMR-based indicator 4D to be tested in the four EPMR conducted in 2007.
- SPME will revise the guidelines for measuring the outcomes now that we have passed the pilot phase
- SPME will include this topic in its deliberation with the CDDC in the pre-AGM meeting.

Item 9: Other business

SPME discussed the need to organising a Stripe review of social/ economic research capacity at the system level. There appears to be two issues. One, the work on policy and markets is fragmented and not very strong. One possibility would be to plan the implementation of the SP 5 through a challenge program and use this as an opportunity to improve the policy capacity and bring in outside partners. (This matter was discussed by SPPS). The other issue is the changing roles of economists and the possible decline in the overall capacity for economic research by the system. Here there may be need for a stripe review. SPME will relook at this in 2008 after the large effort in M&E scheduled for 2007 and once in the full implementation phase of the system priorities.