

8th Meeting of the Standing Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation (SPME)

FAO, Rome, August, 2007

Saturday 25, 14:00 – 17:00

Sunday 26, 9:00 – 15:00

Proceedings

Present:

Ken Fischer, SPME Chair

Members:

Vir Chopra

Paul Vlek

Oswaldo Feinstein

Sirkka Immonen, SPME Secretary

Jenny Nasr, SC Secretariat

The open meeting on Saturday 25th was preceded by internal SPME discussion of some of the items. During the two-day meeting the following persons attended some sessions as observers: Rudy Rabbinge (SC Chair), Kwesi Atta-Krah (ADE Chair, Bioversity International), Paul Harding (Bioversity International), Antonella Pastore (CGXchange project coordinator), Scott Rozelle (SPPS). These proceedings cover all sessions.

Item 1: Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all to the SPME meeting.

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

The Chair went through the action items reporting briefly on achievement. Pending activities were dealt with under the respective agenda items of this 8th meeting.

Item 4: Medium-Term Plans

The SC is phasing down the time and frequency of scrutinizing the Center and CP MTPs in detail. The MTPs should graduate to a level of self-controlled process which the SC does not need to assess annually. This year the SC's review process is leading to identification of Centers and CPs that have a sufficiently high quality MTP in terms of clarity and content that it does not need an in-depth assessment in 2008. The conclusions regarding which MTPs can be staggered will fall from the MTP commentary which addresses the key criteria for MTPs. The SC can decide on a limited assessment of the MTP in areas where it still has weaknesses

or when changes are anticipated for instance following an EP MR. The SC should also continue monitoring the implementation of System Priorities (SPs) during the transition until the framework plans are completed. SPME believes that the three year effort to make the MTP a uniform tool across the System that serves the Centers' own planning and monitoring has been successful. There is still some feeling among Centers that the MTPs represent a burden imposed on the Centers but SPME considers that integration of the tool into Centers' other internal management systems should reduce these perceptions.

In summary, the MTP is an internal planning instrument presenting a rolling plan for the Center's contribution to the implementation of the CGIAR priorities (in the main). The first year of the rolling MTP remains the agreed work plan for approval and funding by the donors of the CGIAR. The MTPs are now reasonably uniform in content and quality and are publicly available (soon to be on-line) thus providing a well defined and traceable work plan for the System. The Centers are responsible for the corrections and adjustment to the MTP in line with their strategic planning to meet the SPs.

The main attention of the SC is now on the implementation of the SP. The main direction for the alignment of the Center MTPs to the agreed upon SP is through the Framework plans reflected in the Strategic Plans of the Centers. In earlier periods TAC (that preceded the SC) reviewed and made commentary on the Strategic Plans of the Centers. SPME recommends that the SC will shift its emphasis to reviewing the Center and CP strategic plans as a standard practice and staggering the review of the MTPs that are a natural spin-off of the strategic plans. A decision should be made that draft strategic plans in the future will be submitted to the SC for commentary. Although the EP MRs are charged to evaluate the relevance of the Center research, they are not timed for evaluating the strategic plans and often they identify a need for the Center to engage in priority setting and strategic planning, which becomes a main recommendation. The commentary by the SC would provide a more timely input into the development of Strategic plans such that they reflect the SPs and match with the Center's remit in contributing to the SPs.

The PM workshop (see item 8 below) discussed the implications of monitoring the achievement of the output targets committed in the MTP through the PMS. The workshop recommended to a) decouple the MTP and the PMS for outputs in the present system and have both the planning and the monitoring function in the MTPs and b) to make this a self monitoring process by the Centers.

The MTPs are being adapted to an on-line system. Paul Harding and Antonella Pastore working for the CGMap (CGIAR MTP Analysis Program) initiative briefed the meeting about progress in developing Center MTP on-line modules and the System's MTP database. The key is that the MTPs are linked to the internal project management systems of each Center and submitted to a Central database where they are analyzable across the System. SPME congratulated the team for taking this initiative. The on-line system will be trialled by some Centers and CPs in 2008 and hopefully becomes a uniform practice in 2009. If it is decided to include the monitoring of the output target achievement in the MTPs, SPME will work closely with the CGMAP team to help make changes into the MTP requirements that facilitate self-monitoring of output target achievement. SPME feels that output targets are still a weakness in most MTPs and it might help Centers to define the targets better if they

were also asked to describe the means of verification at the time of planning. This will require further consideration.

Action for SPME

- SPME will work with the SC to help identify an increasing number of MTPs that will not require an annual in-depth evaluation
- SPME recommends that the SC moves its emphasis to evaluating the Center and CP Strategic plans and that the SC's assessment should be made an obligatory step for finalising strategic plans.
- SPME will work with the CGMap team to develop an MTP on-line module that accurately reflects the SC's requirements for MTP and enforces monitoring of output target achievement.
- SPME will revise the MTP guidelines content so that they are in concert with the on-line tool

Item 5: Systemwide Program follow-up

At SC07, SPME undertook to build on the SWEPS meta-study to elucidate the role of the SWEPS and the "profiles" of these instruments for implementing system priority research. The SPME Secretary gave an overview of SWEPS analysis so far. The Secretariat has compiled data from the SWEPS MTPs for categorising the programs according to their characteristics and for facilitating the analysis regarding their future. SPME decided to proceed with this work. There is need to unravel what is the best instrument for which purpose. Subsequently the on-going SWEPS can be assessed for their relevance for implementing the SPs. In its analysis, SPME can draw from recent EPMRs that have considered the role of the convening Centers and the importance of the SWEPS for the Center's research mandate. Funding as reported and planned in the MTPs is additional aspect that can guide the analysis. It was felt that the SWEPS process needs to be revisited; recommendations about their viability should become periodic and criteria concerning duration and exit should be considered.

Action for SPME

- SPME will complete the follow-up analysis and present it to the SC virtually by early November.

Item 6: Monitoring and Evaluation: Streamlining and EPMRs

a) System-level M&E and opportunities to streamline it

SPME discussed the report of the meta-analysis of the lessons learnt from EPMRs that had been requested by ExCo. Although the report for the most part did not contain meta-evaluation but was more of an evaluation synthesis it has valuable information and "nuggets" of lessons from the EPMRs. The report confirms the importance of the EPMR. SPME would have liked to see a more systematic evaluation across the EPMR reports particularly regarding the programmatic lessons; more careful reference to literature, for example regarding innovation systems which is referred to in the text but not elaborated;

and a more in-depth consideration of how donors could become more involved in EPMRs so as to increase their reliance on these reviews rather than conduct their own reviews. There is need to consider other approaches to get the donors involved in EPMRs than those so far attempted. Donors could be engaged in a meaningful way in discussing the EPMR TOR and strategic issues. SPME would have liked to see more useful generalizations across the EPMR reports. SPME will revisit the EPMR TOR and guidelines to consider what changes in the process may be needed for addressing some of the findings of the review, such as: reducing variability in EPMRs, enhancing consistency in addressing the key TOR and systematic approach to collect data to facilitate comparability of EPMRs, and strengthening the process of formulating the list of strategic issues where donors' views could be better captured. Also it will ensure that feed back on the final report is provided to the many stakeholders that were engaged during the process of the review.

In an effort to streamline the CGIAR's M&E processes further SPME will need to prepare a strategy for an integrated M&E system. This is timely also because the review of the CGIAR System is forthcoming. At this point SPME will not engage in an external formal assessment of the overall M&E, however.

In SPME7 SPME discussed the need for an external review of the M&E process in the CGIAR. The review could look at not only the current practices but provide insights into the use of more appropriate approaches. At that time SPME decided to defer such a study until after the meta-study of the EPMRs. IN SPME8, SPME decided to focus on the implementation of the recommendations from the meta-study and defer the broader external review. Also the forthcoming System review of the CGIAR would provide some insights into the M&E culture of the CGIAR and these insights would also be helpful in planning an external review. The earliest target for an external review would be in 2009. SPME will continue to deliberate on the purpose of that putative review.

b) EPMRs

SPME has been talking about extracting from each EPMR report pieces of knowledge/advice ("nuggets") that have broader utility to the whole system. Regularly extracting such "nuggets" would serve the role of an EPMR synthesis. Synthesizing over several EPMRs would be more valuable than looking only at individual Centers. Nuggets could be combined for a periodic brief. SPME will pilot on collecting issues with the help of Panel Secretaries to judge whether this is a worth while exercise. In revisiting the EPMR TOR the aspect of highlighting issues that have system relevance could be raised.

SPME has planned to carry out a post EPMR survey to continuously improve the reviews. A draft post-EPMR survey questionnaire was shared and when completed the survey will be tested with the four most recent EPMRs and 2 CPERs targeting both Panel and the Center/CP reviewed.

The Standing Panel discussed the progress in implementation of the forthcoming EPMRs of ICRISAT and Bioversity International, and the CPER of Generation CP. Regarding timing of EPMRs, SPME considered that it is optimal to have an EPMR coincide with the change of DG. It seems that in such situation the EPMR is likely to get used most. However, the

Standing Panel made no recommendation on the issue of timing, though this could be taken into account when deciding on the next schedule for EPMRs.

With regard to the EPMR calendar, SPME considered it probable that a follow-up review to the CIAT 6th EPMR would need to be scheduled for 2009 to monitor progress in implementation of the recommendations.

On the issue of CPER quality assurance, SPME feels that more is needed than was done with the first two CPERs. The presence of a resource person from the SC Secretariat should be considered also for CPERs. In addition, a “quality audit” should be conducted before the final CPER report is submitted to check that the TOR have been thoroughly addressed and that the recommendations are supported by sufficient analysis and evidence. CPER teams should be thoroughly briefed, and having the Panel meet face-to-face for preparing the report should be an option.

Action for SPME

- SPME will draft a commentary to the EPMR meta-review report for the SC’s consideration.
- Considering the recommendations and findings of the EPMR meta-study, SPME will revisit the EPMR TOR and guidelines.
- SPME will prepare an M&E strategy
- SPME will finalise the post-EPMR survey questionnaire and test it with the most recent reviews
- SPME will collect “nuggets” from the most recent EPMRs to test the feasibility of such an exercise on periodic basis

Item 7: Stripe reviews

The SPME Chair explained the history of the stripe review of social sciences and provided an update on preparations prior to SPME8 meeting. A small task force led by Scott Rozelle and involving Rob Tripp as an external member had prepared a scoping paper that Scott presented at the SPME meeting for inputs. The scoping paper presents the rationale for a stripe review, including observations repeatedly raised in EPMRs about the weakening of the social science capacity in the Centers. The situation ought to be assessed in the context of the growing social sciences agenda. The review would be conducted in two phases. The first phase will be for compiling the facts about the status of social sciences in the Centers (staff profiles, workplans, outputs, collaboration, costs). The analysis of the state of the current situation will guide determining the focus on some functional areas in the second phase, which will examine in detail the methods, resources, management and organisation of social sciences to assess relevance, efficiency and efficacy and taking into account the different kinds of Centers with different research mandates. The Panel, at least the Chair should be involved already at the first phase. In SPME’s discussion it was noted that with poverty alleviation becoming a key aspect of the CGIAR’s mission a new social sciences dimension was introduced to the organisations. The review should capitalise on the experiences of joint Center activities, linkages with the ARIs and new means of collaboration. It was emphasised that the Centers needed to be involved from the very beginning and also donors should be

contacted (for example DIFD and others have been involved in social science and funding it; i.e. sustainable livelihoods models). It would be useful to extract assessment and issues from EPMRs in the first phase. A key output from the first phase would be the TOR for the second phase. SPME also discussed the desirability of first establishing a normative model of an appropriate or optimal social sciences framework in the CGIAR against which to reflect what is found out in the review and where there are gaps and needs. The system priorities all have a role for social sciences, but an issue for a review Panel would be the balance between the role of upgrading the content of the social sciences in the CGIAR and the role of providing outputs and advice for advancing the applied objectives of the CGIAR research. A third important dimension is contributing to a mind set change of the research community on the whole, which is highly important for outcomes and impact to accrue.

Action for SPME

- SPME will recommend to the SC to conduct of the stripe study in two phases and prepare a brief rationale for the SC work plan 2008/9
- SPME will coordinate the review engaging the task force and proceed next to identify a Chair with excellent stature in social sciences.
- Phase 1 is planned to be completed by SC9

Item 8: Performance Measurement

The record of the join SPME/SPIA PM workshop held on 24th August is annexed to this report. The Standing Panel briefly discussed the outcomes of the workshop. The following conclusions require follow-up action from SPME: i) decoupling the MTP from the PMS has implications to the MTP reporting requirements and self-monitoring that will be facilitated by the public, system level MTP database; ii) the outcome indicator needs to be improved; iii) the publications indicators need to be improved by developing two indicators that measure different things; one horizontal for reach and the other vertical for quality iv) an indicator needs to be developed for capacity building; as a start SPME could consider what kinds of capacity building activities the Centers have and how these activities should be integrated into research. In general SPME concluded that there are too many indicators and overall system needs to be simplified. These changes need to be incorporated into the PMS for the Centers before any indicators are considered for the CPs.

Action for SPME

- SPME will work on revised or new indicators for outcome, publications and capacity building.
- SPME will share the initial suggestions with the ADE at the AGM in China before making any changes to the PM instructions.

Item 9: Lessons learnt from Challenge Programs (CP)

The SPME Chair introduced the item. ExCo has requested that the SC and the CGIAR Secretariat conduct an analysis of lessons learnt from the Challenge Programs. The deadline for the joint paper is by October when it will be submitted for the 13th ExCo meeting. Also the ADE is preparing a paper on lessons learnt and has shared the executive summary with

SPME. ADE Chair, Kwesi Atta-Krah explained that the intention behind the ADE exercise, which included a canvassing of comments from all Centers, has been to put some pressure to lead the CP process to the right direction. Issues of transparency, Center relations, mechanisms of governance and Center involvement in CPS are important from the Alliance point of view. Also, there should be consideration of the validity of the CP instrument and whether the CGIAR is getting to what was expected from this instrument. The ADE intends to discuss the specific lessons at Beijing and make suggestions to the SC for taking some issues into account in the next cycle of CPs. It was noted that the different lessons learnt represent different perspectives; the SC/CGIAR Secretariat paper will look at lessons for the System as a whole and the ADE paper reflects the views of the individual Centers.

A section of the lessons learnt document dealing with lessons from the CP selection process was already drafted and provided to SPME as background document for this item. SPME agreed that the lessons on the on-going CPs should cover the following key issues: i) project focus, defining the challenge; ii) CP instrument vs. Center instrument in terms of value added and efficiency in producing the results and the functioning of inter-Center collaboration; iii) duration, timing and exit strategy—CPs by definition are expected to have clear time frames for solving a clearly defined challenge after which the research can be mainstreamed to the core research. SPME agreed on the time frame for completing the SC's part of the paper.

Action for SPME

- SPME will coordinate the preparation of the SC's component of the lessons learnt document, which will be finalised in consultation with the CGIAR and submitted for ExCo13.

Item 10: SPME workplan for 2008/9

SPME will present the draft work plan to the SC in the plenary.

Item 11: Other business

SPME discussed the forthcoming review of the 2nd Cycle Challenge Program pre-proposals for which the deadline for submission was 10th September. Following information from the Alliance it was anticipated that there would be only one pre-proposal for each topic representing a significant Center involvement. There was concern that the submission would not include several competing proposals that fulfilled the criteria for CP pre-proposal. Nevertheless SPME will recommend to the SC that external people would be engaged in the pre-proposal review and would share draft short lists for comments and endorsement.

Action for SPME

- SPME will prepare short lists of potential pre-proposal reviewers for SC's consideration.

Annex 1.**SCIENCE COUNCIL OF THE CGIAR****Record of the
CGIAR PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT WORKSHOP**

Friday 24 August, 2007, FAO, Rome

The workshop on the CGIAR's Performance Measurement System (PMS) was organised by the Science Council's Standing Panels on Monitoring and Evaluation (SPME), and Impact Assessment (SPIA). The purpose was:

1. To discuss our experiences after 3 years of the PMS and assess how well the current indicators in general, and for research performance in particular reflect "real" performance of the Centers (as could be validated by external reviews).
2. To consider what implications the PMS is having on performance, its role in and effect on self-assessment and the use of PM indicators by donor/investors.
3. To examine how the indicators could more precisely reflect Center performance, thereby improving accountability and performance management, and contribute to streamlining the overall M&E system.

The workshop was divided into an introductory session reflecting on the purpose and intention of the CGIAR's PMS and on experiences from three years of operation of the PMS, and a main session which focussed on reviewing experiences and on the possible improvement of the research performance indicators with which the SC has been mainly involved. The list of participants is provided in the Annex.

I. Introduction and experiences after three years of PMS

Four introductory presentations were provided:

The CGIAR Secretariat's presentation on the PMS provided a brief recap of the early development and current objectives of the PMS and experiences and feedback as reflected in the recent meetings of the ExCo and the Group. The observations included: the need to use the PMS to spot problems early on; the critical importance of PMS for sustaining resource mobilization in the long run and maintaining the credibility of the System; how verification insures that the system remains fair; the need to closely link PMS to the EPMR process; and the important complementarity of the Stakeholder Perception Survey to the PMS. Two examples were given of donors using the PMS as an explicit input into funding decisions. For the World Bank the PMS is considered a "best practice" and it is a critical requirement for the annual funding. In 2007 50% of the general support is linked to PMS, with approximately 50% weight to the science-related indicators. GTZ administers 75% of Germany's funding to the CGIAR, and 30% of that is based on the PMS. The indicators used were selected on the basis of the German development policy with focus on impact, diversity and culture of learning and change. The CGIAR Secretariat suggests attention to the following: a) advancing the accountability needs should be balanced with the reporting burden; b) research related indicators should be improved (e.g. the validity of the output indicator, inclusion of an assessment of actual impact, further standardization of the

publication indicator; c) governance indicators that show no variation could be consolidated; and d) trends could be monitored.

Paul Harding presented the Alliance perspective that was accompanied by a paper prepared with input from all Centers. It was emphasised that accountability is right and proper and the PMS is necessary but should be implemented at a reduced scale. The PMS is one of many processes that have evolved for monitoring and evaluation and add to the workload of Centers. There is need to rationalise the on-going efforts. The PMS currently has too many indicators/questions and there are several issues of PMS logistics that need improvement, for instance on numbering, uploading supporting documents and definitions. Centers are also concerned about the transparency and use of the PMS and have questions about the rationale for some indicators, what best performance is expected so that Centers can learn and aim at improvement, use of weights and selection of indicators particularly for resource allocation, unintentional misuse and inappropriate comparisons. Centers also feel that verification, although necessary, is too demanding a process adding to the overall burden on Centers. There were several observations on the indicators for research performance: output indicator encouraged “safe” planning and progress should be taken into account; publication indicators don’t sufficiently reflect the different “values” of publications and clarification is needed in the denominator; impact indicator is important but too detailed at present. Centers would like to see the governance indicators reduced, and an indicator added for capacity building.

Oswaldo Feinstein from SPME addressed what the PMS is really measuring. It was useful to consider the aims for the PMS compared with what was actually being measured to identify gaps in the PMS process. The PMS should indeed serve both accountability and learning functions, which are complements, but more clarity is required in that regard, i.e., who is accountable for what, and what learning was intended. Performance measurement should facilitate improved performance management. Lessons from PM experience relate to, for example, ownership, which has implications for who should be involved in the design; and to the risks of the process and its interpretation, including non-use, mis-use and bureaucratization. He also discussed the challenges related to the output indicator as not all research results can be predicted up front; many emerge in an uncertain way, and with significant lags. Important issues that need to be addressed include: measurement of partial achievement, the mechanical use of PM indicators for resource allocation, ratings and benchmarking, the link between the PMS with M&E in general, and with the EPMRs in particular.

The fourth input to the workshop was a paper prepared by Leslie Cooksy, ex-SPME member, on analysis and reflections on the PMS. The experiences were discussed against five commonly-agreed upon recommendations for performance measurement: Define and agree upon the monitoring system’s purpose; Link performance measurement systems to organizational mission; Ensure consistent interpretations of indicators; Create indicators that are useful for decision-making; and, Use PM as one part of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system. Some of the positive features are that (1) the PM system began with a clear statement of its accountability purpose; (2) much work has gone to refine, clarify, and communicate the definitions of the indicators; and (3) the PM system is part of an integrated monitoring and evaluation system. Concerns include: (1) variables are included that may be more appropriate for internal management than for external oversight purposes; (2) not all key stakeholders have been able to participate in developing the PMS resulting in questions about its credibility in the eyes of those whose performance is being measured; and (3) questions about the utility of some indicators for comparisons across Centers and about the consistency of their interpretation. The risks of the

current system are also discussed in the paper: inhibiting innovation (relates to the output indicator); increased competition may lead to loss of collaborative work; measuring performance too frequently or not frequently enough, losing meaning over time (if Centers reach the top of the scale every year). In her paper Cooksy concludes that before the progression toward an established system is completed, a full assessment of the system's validity, usefulness, and resource requirements is required.¹

In the general discussion the following points were made:

- Donors should be advised to use the PMS results as one source of information for guiding their resource allocation decisions, rather than base those decisions directly on the annual indicator results.
- Links should be established between all elements of the M&E system.
- It should be considered whether fewer indicators would be preferable and, if so, whether a smaller core set could be identified.
- It would be useful to provide a bench mark for indicators to assist in self assessment and to allow progress over time to be monitored.
- Guideline should be provided for appropriate use of the PM indicators.
- More transparency in weighting schemes is desirable.
- Focus should be on trends over time within Centers rather than absolute scores among Centers at a point in time; the former are arguably more valuable to Centers while the donors may prefer the latter.
- The ADE experiences in particular emphasise cost and burden. It is important to emphasise the main purpose of the PMS: enhancing accountability and learning, promoting better internal monitoring and performance management.
- Verification is crucial in the PMS.
- How to incorporate the EPMR assessment of research performance into the PM process?
- The CGIAR Secretariat commented on the need to further strengthen the evaluation of output targets at the MTP stage in order to ensure realistic target setting and to prevent "gaming" of the output target indicator in the PMS

II. How to improve the PM indicators related to research.

The current PM system uses the following indicators:

a) Research results: Indicators for outputs, outcomes and impact

Outputs

The following points were made during the discussion:

- There is a real danger that the external and mechanical use of the output targets as indicator of output leads to setting easy targets in order to ensure full achievement.
- Output targets have become useful for Centers' internal monitoring.
- The definition of output targets have become clearer but the output target statements still vary much in level of detail in their description and in terms of magnitude of the result.
- SPME still sees problems with their verifiability due to the vagueness in describing them.
- The setting of adequate and ambitious output targets should be monitored at the MTP stage, and if necessary negotiated before the MTPs are recommended for approval by ExCo; this

¹ All background materials are available at the SC Secretariat. In addition to the PowerPoint presentations and the papers by the ADE and Cooksy, they include background notes on Outputs, Outcomes, Impact, and Quality and Relevance, and compilation of PM results for three years.

will strengthen validity and reliability of the indicator of result at the performance measurement stage.

- Assumptions and means of verification are important aspects of setting output targets. The SC attempts to assess the level of ambition inherent in the logframe plans, but it is difficult to assess whether the output targets are ambitious enough without sufficient background and context. There is a risk of micromanagement. If output targets are developed through some kind of negotiation their ownership by Center management may be lost.
- Typically research and development institutions display “*ex ante* optimism”, i.e., they set very ambitious targets to attract resources. This is not the case with the MTPs – where output targets are set. This is because MTPs are not first and foremost used to attract funding. On the contrary, Centers’ output targets tend to be conservative because Centers want to protect themselves (i.e. to meet targets 100% to protect funding allocated on this basis).
- Ideally the MTP should be a basis for a self-monitoring system and Centers should have incentives to do the MTP in such a way that it most appropriately reflects what of significance the Center plans to do and believes it can accomplish. There should be as little need as possible for the SC to comment on the detail of the plans.
- For the reasons described above, the output indicator seems to create perverse incentives – for low level achievement planning. It can serve better as a management tool if it is not linked to the PMS.
- Moving the output indicator from an external to an internal monitor would reduce the “gaming” in the present use of the indicator. As good practice each Center should be responsible for defining what it intends to produce and how it intends to verify it.
- If the output targets are not linked to the PMS, partial achievement is less of an issue. It is legitimate and can be monitored by management. Centers need to decide what to plan and how to report to an external audience on progressive achievement.

It was concluded that the output targets are useful and needed for Center management, but they serve as a weak indicator that is likely to have adverse effects on planning. Therefore SPME and SPIA feel that output targets should not be used as a PM indicator. With this change Centers would be free to set ambitious targets which are important in the planning (MTP) and in management. Subsequently adjustment will be needed in the MTP process to create incentives for development of relevant and ambitious targets, while ensuring sufficient incentives to that the MTP process and the setting of output targets does not become meaningless. The monitoring of achievement becomes a Center responsibility and the EPMRs will assess achievement and delivery of research results and the rigour of the internal monitoring and evaluation process. The on-line MTP database will allow monitoring of output target achievement over years.

Outcomes

The following points were made during the discussion:

- The indicator has several weaknesses; the number of cases to be reported is an arbitrary number, the outcomes that can be reported can be of very different magnitude; the indicator does not serve well an accountability purpose nor is it suitable as a management improvement tool.
- The criteria used for assessing the outcome narratives are limited to process and do not include an assessment of the “significance” of the outcome.
- The outcome indicator does not allow for incremental steps; verification is not clear cut; variable and sometimes long lag times between generation of outputs and realization of

outcomes can vitiate the usefulness of linking outputs and outcomes over limited time horizons of 1-2 years.

- There are demands from donors that the PMS should inform them about outcomes and impacts; these demands could be best dealt with through an improved outcome indicator and by using information produced by EPMRs.
- The indicator could be better linked to the logframe planning and the outcomes expected by the Centers.
- The indicator could be better based on Centers' own documentation but there is need to define the time of documenting outcomes to differentiate outcome from output on one hand and from impacts on the other hand. Adoption currently gets documented also in the impact indicator.
- The qualitative assessment of the submissions could be improved.
- The value of the outcome indicator can also be seen in assessing the relevance of what the Centers are doing. They validate the earlier MTPs by showing the link from results to uptake and outcome. However serendipitous and long-term outcomes can be missed in the current approach and for a system engaged in strategic IPG research this is not desirable.
- Further strengthening of the link between the planned outcome in the MTPs and the reported outcome during the PM exercise should be considered.

It was concluded that there is need to improve the outcome indicator to enhance its value for accountability and use as a management tool and for informing donors. SPME would develop in draft some proposed changes to share with the ADE at the AGM in China.

Impact

The SPIA Chair introduced the main issues about the impact indicators. There is need to distinguish between building an impact culture and "real" or measured impacts. Attempting to develop an indicator for "real" impact would put the Centers in a different position relative to each other, the older ones automatically being in a better position. SPIA is not in a position to develop a "real" impact indicator. Regarding indicator 3A, which is an annual indicator, SPIA this year used an indicative "yardstick" or "benchmark" approach (rather than using the best performing Center's achievement in a given component as the yardstick or standard for all others). For a given indicator component, SPIA established a yardstick or optimal value, which when achieved receives the highest possible score for that indicator, e.g., Centers that invested 2% or more of their total resource expenditure on impact assessment received the highest score for that component. The yardstick approach allows progress over time by each Center to be gauged, whereas use of the best performing Center each year facilitates annual Center ranking. One issue is whether yardsticks should be revised each year to allow more differentiation among Centers. Also three-year moving averages may be a preferred indicator to avoid annual random fluctuations.

SPIA has applied weights for the 3A components and has published them. The indicator relies on Centers' self-assessment and there was no verification of the information provided beyond certain basic criteria that SPIA applied, e.g., each study submitted had to qualify as an ex-post impact assessment. To respond to the donors' demand to get documentation of "real" impacts, maybe purposely selected (cherry-picked) impact stories that Centers submit under both indicators 3A and 3B could be provided directly to donors. Otherwise it is difficult to capture the size of the impact in an indicator.

The following points were made during the discussion:

- The impact indicator has been developed and revised in close consultation with the Centers' impact assessment focal points incorporating their views in the current check list approach. Reducing the "detail" will tend to bias some Centers over others, depending on which components are eliminated.
- The "complexity" in the indicator 3A is useful and necessary (to some extent) for capturing in a transparent manner all the different relevant components of a Center's impact culture.
- There may be need for the Alliance and the SC to discuss for example the 3A indicator further during the joint meeting in December, although Center impact assessment focal points who are perhaps more closely involved in the PMS exercise should also take part in this discussion.
- An issue is how well do the selected impact stories reflect the entire portfolio and impacts derived from the overall work of the Centers. Currently, Centers responding to the accountability requirement, have selected those areas of their work where they can show most impact, which fulfils an important accountability function. The same applies to outcomes.
- Regarding "yardsticks", or optimal values for indicators, it is important to maintain the ability to compare Centers over both time and space; however, differentiation among Centers should not be the primary objective.
- CGIAR Members would welcome an indicator of "actual" impact complementing the indicator for the Center's commitment to documenting impacts and building and impact assessment culture.
- It is very likely that no matter how the indicator is shaped or its purpose communicated, donors may use it for funding purposes as an indicator of actual impact. However, efforts should be made to minimize this misuse, and particular attention should be paid to the way in which the indicators are labelled so as to avoid inducing their misuse.
- How much attention should SPIA give to those indicators that may be mis-used or not used at all?
- Components of the 3A impact indicator require verification.
- Could the 3B indicator be assessed annually by the submission of only one epIA study each year, combined with the use of a three-year moving average?

It was concluded that the impact indicators would be revisited with the ADE in Beijing before the AGM.

b) Quality and relevance of research

The SPME chair noted that publications are used as a measure of the ability to produce research results. In most other research institutes publications are considered as part of results i.e. outputs. This difference may be too subtle and it might be better to include publications as part of the results indicators (which could still be interpreted as "revealing" an ability to produce those results).

The following points were made during the discussion:

- In this PMS publications are predominantly a measure of quality, less of a measure of results
- Publication indicators don't sufficiently reflect the different "values" of publications for mission and knowledge generation by the Centers.
- Publications reported by Centers are quite diverse in their content regarding quality and the rigorousness of the review; need for more standardization of the indicator.

- Publication indicators need to reflect on one hand the quality of the publications and on the other hand the reach of and access to the publications by the intended audiences. The suggestion was to revise the indicators so that these two different aspects would get covered
- Since Centers choose in which venues they intend to publish, indicators need to reflect different aspects of publishing, but how many indicators are realistic? Also there are issues of citation indices among different disciplines.
- Currently the only indicator intended to measure relevance is that of co-publishing with NARS. Indeed, this is not an indicator of “relevance” but of “partnership”.
- Relevance is related to the alignment of Center research to the CGIAR System Priorities.
- The SC’s assessment of the MTPs is the key means for assessing the relevance of research in the CGIAR and this could be considered enough, without need to add relevance indicators to the PMS.
- There is need to develop an indicator for capacity building, which is of particular interest to NARS.

In conclusion the workshop decided to suggest that publications would be considered as a results indicator in the PMS, the indicators for publishing would be revised to reflect both reach of target audience and quality, and an indicator would be developed for capacity building.

Annex.

Attendance:

Ken Fischer, SPME

Paul Vlek, SPME

Oswaldo Feinstein, SPME

Jim Ryan, SPIA

Mywish Maredia, SPIA

Flavio Avila, SPIA

Mike Gale, SPPS

Emile Frison, AE

Kwesi Atta Krah, ADE

Paul Harding, Bioversity International

Iain MacGillivray, CIDA

Ruben Echeverría, SC Secretariat

Beatriz Avalos-Sartorio, SC Secretariat

Robert Chapman, SC Secretariat

Peter Gardiner, SC Secretariat

Sirkka Immonen, SC Secretariat

Timothy Kelley, SC Secretariat

Jenny Nasr, SC Secretariat

Haruko Okusu, SC Secretariat

Nega Wubeneh, SC Secretariat

Through video-conference:

Namita Datta, CGIAR Secretariat

Maria Iskandarani, CGIAR Secretariat

Maria Lara, CGIAR Secretariat