



Minutes of the Thirty-Sixth Meeting of SPIA (SPIA 36)
CIFOR Headquarters, Bogor, Indonesia
1-3 September 2009

Attendance (Members and Observers):

Derek Byerlee (SPIA Chair), Mywish Maredia (SPIA Member), Ross Conner (SPIA Member), Tim Kelley (SPIA Secretary), James Stevenson (Consultant, SPIA/SC), Meredith Soule (USAID), Harry Palmier (CGIAR Secretariat), Aden Aw-Hasan (ICARDA), Rudy Rabbinge (SC Chair). Apologies: Prabhu Pingali (Associate SPIA Member)

1. Opening comments

DB welcomed members and observers to the meeting and requested that everyone briefly introduce himself or herself.

2. Review of agenda

The proposed agenda for the open session of SPIA 36 had been slightly revised during the preceding two days of closed sessions; the chair proposed the following agenda sequence after the next item:

- (i) Ongoing studies
- (ii) Update on outreach and other activities
- (iii) Future of SPIA
 - a. Context of change management and the Social Science Stripe Review
 - b. Priorities for work plan

This proposed agenda was adopted without modification.

3. SPIA 35 Meeting Minutes follow-up

There were no issues arising from the previous meeting minutes except those related to issues that will be followed-up in this meeting.

4. Ongoing studies

The SPIA Chair gave a brief overview of and status report on the three initiatives currently underway.

a. Study on measuring environmental impacts from CG research

In April 2009 SPIA developed and circulated a proposal for moving forward with phase II of this study: case studies assessing the environmental impacts from CGIAR research. From eleven concept note proposals received and externally peer reviewed, SPIA selected five (a sixth was added later) that offered the best prospects for measuring and valuing environmental impacts. Each receives some financial support and guidance from SPIA. The case studies are from IWMI (management of sluice gates in the Mekong delta), ICRAF (intensification of rubber agroforestry in Indonesia), CIAT (cultivating beans in Africa), ICARDA (supplemental irrigation on rain-fed wheat production in Syria), CIP (crop improvement and biodiversity conservation trade-offs in the Andes), and ICAR (zero tillage in rice-wheat system of the Indo-Gangetic Plains). A planning workshop was held in Rome from 21-22 June to present, discuss and finalise methods and workplans. Revised workplans

were submitted by the case study leaders to SPIA in July and a consolidated commentary sent back to case study leaders on behalf of SPIA by the lead consultant on this project, Jeff Bennett. While SPIA had been fairly explicit about the content of the workplans, in many cases the workplans were not sufficiently detailed and progress appears to be slow in several cases. The case studies may not be able to show large-scale environmental impacts, as was initially hoped for, but they may contribute towards advancing the methodological frontiers in *ex post* environment impact assessment of agricultural research, albeit at smaller scale.

The case studies are expected to be completed early in 2010, followed by a results workshop and, thereafter, an exercise to synthesize results and conceptualize how environmental impact assessments (EIAs) can be conducted in the future. While this study follows SPIA's traditional 'business model' i.e., a scoping paper (completed in Phase 1), followed by Center case studies with SPIA support and external expert guidance (Phase 2), SPIA is reconsidering whether this partnership mode of operation is still the best approach (as it seemed to be for the NRM and policy research IAs). SPIA does have some concern about the quality of some case studies and the capacity of the Centers to successfully undertake these EIA case studies, particularly in view of the limited budgets and short timeframes.

MS asked how this study was different from the earlier SPIA case studies documenting impacts from NRM research, and subsequently published in a CABI book. TK responded that the NRM IA study was intended to explore impacts from areas of research other than crop germplasm improvement research, starting with NRM research (and subsequently policy research), whereas the current study is about trying to deepen and expand our understanding of the type of impact, going beyond simple economic measures to environmental impacts. DB emphasized that this study is mainly about externalities – their identification, measurement and valuation. One of the objectives of the study is to look to the future of the CGIAR and think about the universe of environmental impacts to feed into processes such as baseline survey design, which can then build towards a more macro-level picture of the impacts of the CGIAR. Further discussions prompted by observers established that the study will cover both intended (especially the IWMI and World Agroforestry studies) and unintended impacts. Development of appropriate methods for measurement and valuation of environmental impacts is a major objective of this exercise.

b. Impact of crop germplasm improvement (CGI) research revisited

DB explained that the data on the adoption of improved varieties is now out of date. During the period since the Evenson and Gollin study in 1998, there has been a relative shift (and in some centres an absolute decline in investment) away from CGI and into NRM and policy oriented research. The Gates Foundation is set to invest up to \$1 billion USD into CGI related activities over the next 10 years, so they have a vested interest in getting good data on crop variety adoption and impact. DB outlined the three components of the study, which involves seven commodity Centers and SPIA and focuses on sub-Saharan Africa (with separate studies to look at South Asia and South East Asia) as follows:

1. Databases on varieties, investments and then expert opinion on use
2. National adoption surveys in selected countries (multi-crop surveys with the centres working together)

3. Competitive grants for methods and impacts on food security and poverty.

Candidate centres / ARIs will be encouraged to use innovative methods (e.g. use of molecular fingerprinting in farmers' fields) and to work in partnership.

Funded by a special grant from the Gates Foundation, the \$2.9 m project is expected to commence from late 2009, and a detailed planning meeting will take place early in 2010. Bioversity will be the contractee of this grant and co-managing this project with SPIA. The SPIA Chair will lead the program steering committee.

There was some debate about the relative weight that should be given to components 2 and 3. The choice of methods for component 2 has implications for the kinds of analysis that are possible in component 3. For example, MM and JS pointed out that using area estimates as the basis for adoption data (component 2), rather than using a survey of households, limits the range of impacts that can be examined. It was agreed that component 2 needs re-assessing both now (prior to proposal finalization) but especially during the planning meeting.

MS asked why SPIA had decided to take funding from the Gates Foundation when previous offers from other donors had been turned down. DB responded that SPIA hadn't been given instructions not to use grant money in support of its work and that the Gates Foundation saw SPIA's involvement as the only way of maintaining quality. More importantly, SPIA regards this initiative as fundamentally important for the System at large, and therefore constitutes part of SPIA's strategy and near-term operational plan. SPIA was initially reluctant to take this study on – if the consortium had been up and running then it would naturally fit within their remit. TK explained that SPIA is conscious that it should not be or be seen to be competing for scarce funds with the centres. He added that none of the Gates grant money will be used for SPIA. All SPIA related expenses for this project will be sourced from the SPIA/SC budget.

c. Use of Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) in epIA

DB characterised normal practice in epIA of agricultural research in the CGIAR as being based on estimating the average effect size, scale effect and subsequently the total benefits derived from a research based intervention, and comparing this with the costs of the research. Experimental methods (Randomised Control Trials (RCTs), where treatment and control are randomly assigned) and quasi-experimental methods (where a treatment group is statistically matched to a comparison group) are widely used in other fields, and have seen a rapid growth in profile in the development sector. DB noted that SPIA is examining how experimental methods can be used in genuinely ex-post studies, given that most experimental methods are on limited scales and over short time horizons, and that the most likely application is in "efficacy studies". MM has been developing a paper exploring these issues. The paper makes an explicit differentiation between the practice of 'impact evaluation' and 'epIA' based on timing and motivations, and draws comparisons and implications for the scope and feasibility of using experimental designs along the results chain of R4D activities. The current version will be revised based on discussions at SPIA 36 and thereafter be finalized (after going through a peer review process) and posted on the website.

SPIA also briefly discussed the idea of some field research in this respect, i.e., field studies to compare the potential value in using RCTs to more credibly estimate a key parameter in epIAs, the treatment effect, or 'k' factor. Using a just released (and promising) CG-derived improved crop variety, for example, it would be possible to examine the effectiveness and efficiency of using (i) experimental, (ii) quasi-experimental and (iii) standard approaches for establishing the treatment effect (Es) in large scale epIAs. The objective would be to determine the cost effectiveness of using RCTs for assessing the value of some common CGIAR outputs.

5. Update on outreach and other activities

DB briefly summarized three areas of SPIA outreach: communication and dissemination; links to professional activities; and the results of the PMS (impact indicator) related activity. Peter Hazell, author of the SPIA-commissioned green cover report on "An Assessment of the Impact of Agricultural Research in South Asia since the Green Revolution" was invited to submit a revised version of this paper to the *Handbook of Agricultural Economics* (Vol 4). The editor of *World Development* recently gave the green light to proceed with a formal external review of the nine papers submitted for a special issue on 'measuring impacts of policy-oriented research'. Two external reviews are underway. An abridged version of the Maredia and Raitzer report of the SPIA-commissioned Impact of CGIAR research in Sub-Saharan Africa meta-analysis is currently under final review in *Agricultural Economics*. The Renkow-Byerlee paper on "The Impacts of CGIAR Research: A Review of Recent Evidence" has recently been submitted to *Food Policy* for review. The paper builds on the report of the 2008 Independent External Review of the CGIAR.

SPIA is making serious efforts to connect with professional associations and organizations interested in impact evaluation. These include the Network of Networks on Impact Evaluation (NONIE), the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) and the African Evaluation Association. SPIA member MM attended the Cairo Conference in April 2009 co-sponsored by these three organizations. At the recent International Agricultural Economics Association meeting in Beijing in August 2009 on "Innovative Approaches to ex Post Impact Evaluation of Agricultural Research", the SPIA chair organized a mini symposium which involved four presentations by Center IAFPs, all related to either on-going or recently completed joint initiatives between the Centers and SPIA. SPIA has recently initiated some dialogue with a new evaluation network on impact evaluation of agricultural products, AADAPT.

TK gave a brief summary of the changes made this year to the PMS impact indicator, around which there was Center IA focal point consensus. Centers' submissions are scored using a combination of evaluation by centers (self-evaluation), SPIA and peer review. SPIA has made a conscious effort to communicate results each year back to Centers and to make an overall assessment of Center performance. There was agreement that the indicator on impact culture has been useful. MS gave the donor perspective that there is not a good system yet for differentiating among centres. DB added that the indicator on impact culture should be seen in the context of the other indicators and not be used as a sole basis for making allocation decisions. DB was also wary about the major time commitment involved for SPIA members and the SC Secretariat in performing this role. MS noted that USAID has a new

evaluation unit and JS noted that DFID has launched a new evaluation policy and has been consulting on their 5-year workplan.

6. Future of SPIA: Developing a Strategy and Operational Plan

DB spent significant time explaining how the current environment is likely to affect the way in which SPIA operates and what the strategies and priorities of the panel should be for the future. At SPIA 35, members had agreed to prepare a short document describing SPIA's mandate, strategy, tactics and on-going and planned studies, including a paragraph on how the panel will in the future be addressing some under-explored areas of impact assessment, i.e., related to poverty, food security, gender, capacity building, environment and biodiversity. In the process of doing this over the past several months, panel members have reflected on a number of important changes in the external environment affecting or likely to affect SPIA's strategy. These were discussed by the panel and observers.

a. Change Management Initiative and the Social Science Stripe Review

The first and most important influence is the ongoing CGIAR Change Management Initiative and TMT that commissioned seven different 'work streams', the outcomes of which could fundamentally change how SPIA functions, e.g., whether it continues to collaborate with Center IA focal points. The workstream covering the new Independent Science and Partnership Council (ISPC) recently commissioned a report to articulate new roles and responsibilities for the ISPC. With respect to SPIA's role within the ISPC, the report recommends more independence for SPIA within the ISPC and from the Centers, and recommends additional resources for carrying out its role, which was broadened to embrace *ex-ante* IA. Other workstreams will also affect what ultimately SPIA is charged to do within the system, i.e., the Strategy and Results Framework which will be using results indicators related to poverty, food and the environment, and the 'accountability framework', which will more clearly demarcate M&E responsibilities within and between the main pillars of the System (Consortium, donors, ISPC, etc.).

The second likely influence is the recently completed SC-commissioned Social Science Stripe Review. This review highlighted the weak capacity in the centers for conducting impact assessments, as reflected in many studies of low quality and credibility. Although the exact definition of *ex post* impact assessment was not clear, the review panel was very clear in its indictment of the incentive for, evaluation of, and capacity to undertake impact studies within the system. The fact that the review does not discriminate between these studies creates some uncertainty and obvious concern about the quality of other rigorous IAs, both at the Center and System (SPIA's) level. The report, however, sees an important continuing role for SPIA and recognises that the panel is significantly under-resourced. It recommends greater resources be made available to SPIA (including for *ex-ante* IA).

In this changing context, and given SPIA's recent experience in working with Centers on the EIA case studies (see concerns above), two broad options for how SPIA operates in the new CGIAR system were proposed and discussed: a) the "business as usual" mode, where SPIA works in partnerships with Centers in carrying out epIAs, and b) a "revamped SPIA" mode, transforming SPIA into a more independent body which undertakes primary epIAs on behalf of the donors and reports directly to them. DB noted that both options will require greater funding than SPIA receives at present, but option b much more so. The relative

balance between core grants and special projects would be difficult to strike. The consensus amongst SPIA members is that the focus should remain on ex-post IA. The SC chair agreed with this but emphasized that ex-ante IA should remain within the SC. He also expressed support for SPIA retaining its partnership mode of operation (option a) but building in appropriate firewalls. An observer (ICARDA) also expressed concern about lack of support in the centers if option b is followed, in addition to some amount of duplication of effort.

b. Priorities for the next work plan

DB provided some background and rationale for its proposed workplan in 2010 and beyond. Impact assessment in the CGIAR has moved well beyond the traditional rate of return studies. While donors still want to be reassured that investing in the CGIAR pays handsomely, they are most interested in how the CGIAR contributes to global development goals, as defined in the MDGs: poverty reduction, food security, gender equality, and environmental sustainability. SPIA has long recognized the need to push impact assessment further down the impact pathway toward these goals. Previous work has attempted to document the impact of CGIAR research on poverty (the IFPRI case studies were a good start, albeit with some methodological weaknesses) but has done little work on food security, gender and social impacts more generally.

SPIA intends to build its work over the next three years around filling these critical gaps in impact assessment, including work that will improve methods for undertaking such studies. It needs also to push out the knowledge frontier of impact assessment into 'difficult areas' that have not been subject to impact assessment. These include capacity building, genetic resources and biodiversity. Finally, a challenge for the CGIAR is to maintain its flagship areas of impacts assessment, especially on crop germplasm improvement, not only updating previous information but also pushing for measuring impacts that are of major interest to donors.

Thus, the aim for SPIA over the next several years is to complete the ongoing activities related to EIA studies and updating the impact on CGI research (outlined previously), and for SPIA to concentrate future work on two fronts:

- 1) Deepening impact assessment by working at both household and economy-wide levels and moving into areas of impact that are under-evaluated such as food security, poverty and gender;
- 2) Extend epIA into areas of CGIAR activity that are currently under-evaluated: biodiversity; germplasm collection, characterization & evaluation; and training/capacity building

SPIA is now finalizing its new strategy and operational plan for 2010-2015 and will circulate this to interested donors in due course for comments and suggestions.

Following the description of SPIA future priorities, there was a lengthy discussion about several aspects. Clarification was sought about the following:

- the origins of the SPIA mandate and whether *ex-ante* IA was envisioned (it wasn't, but was part of the TAC);
- the meaning of 'independence', i.e., was it reporting directly to donors (donor's view), or simply not having a vested interest in the matter (SC Chair view), or did it relate to determination of one's own workplan?;

- the need for some collaboration (or cooperation) with centers even if option b (above) is followed, e.g., in securing the necessary data for the IA;
- the implications of following option b, including a need for the independent ISPC panel on program evaluation to assess the quality and rigor of impact assessment at the centers.

Members agreed that SPIA should be proactive in describing both the need for independent assessment of the impact of CGIAR research and how an independent panel might function, i.e., under either option a or b.

The SPIA Chair closed the meeting by thanking the members and the observers for their participation.



**36th SPIA Meeting
CIFOR Headquarters, Bogor, Indonesia
3 September 2009**

Open Session (08:30 – 13:00)

Standing Panel on Impact Assessment Members: Derek Byerlee (chair), Mywish Maredia, Ross Connor, Prabhu Pingali (associate member), Tim Kelley (secretary)

Provisional Agenda

1. Welcome by SPIA Chair

2. SPIA 36 Meeting Agenda

3. SPIA 35 Meeting Minutes follow-up

4. SPIA strategy re-visited

- revisiting the strategy (vision, mandate, tactics/activities) in the light of the CGIAR reform process and the ISPC Task Force Report
- discuss notes on a strategy and operational plan 2010 – 2015

5. On-going Studies / Activities

- updates provided by the SPIA focal point, members assess progress on each and consider corrective action if required

5.1. Adoption and IA of CGI – update (Gates funded)

- update on proposal finalization and first planning workshop

5.2. Environmental Impact Assessment

- planning & methods workshop in June and submission of detailed workplans

5.3. Randomized Control Trials for Impact Assessment

- review revised paper and discuss implications and next steps if any

5.4. Renkow-Byerlee paper on Impacts of CGIAR

- discuss implications for SPIA

5.5. Networking

- a. IAAE meeting in Beijing (update on special session organized by SPIA)
- b. African Evaluat. Ass. meeting in Cairo Mar '09 (highlights, implications for SPIA)
- c. NONIE (update on recent developments; implications for SPIA)

5.6. Other

- PORIA: publication of case studies and synthesis in World Development
- PMS: outcome from 2009 exercise

6. SPIA Workplan for 2010-2011

- in the light of Item #4 above, some preliminary ideas/ concept notes for discussion

6.1 Continuing studies / activities

6.1.1 Impact of CGI update (Gates funded)

6.1.2 EIA study (final reports, final workshop)

6.2 New studies/initiatives

6.2.1. Social impact assessment study

a) Impact of CGIAR research on poverty

b) Impact of CGIAR research on gender (or food security)

6.2.2. Genetic resources and biodiversity IA study

6.2.3 Capacity building IA study

7. Other Initiatives

7.1 IAFP-SPIA meeting in 2010 (or 2011)

7.2 PMS impact indicator ??

7.3 Updating IA Guidelines

7.4 Communication of IA results analysis (impact of IA effort)

8. Other Business