Report on the scoping study for the project on ‘Impact Evaluation Approaches for Collaborative Agricultural Research and Development’

July 2009
The ILAC Initiative fosters learning from experience and use of the lessons learned to improve the design and implementation of agricultural research and development programmes. The mission of the ILAC Initiative is to develop, field test and introduce methods and tools that promote organisational learning and institutional change in CGIAR centres and their partners, to expand the contributions of agricultural research to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Citation:

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Report on the scoping study for the project on ‘Impact Evaluation Approaches for Collaborative Agricultural Research and Development’

Executive summary

IN RESPONSE TO CALLS for new approaches for evaluating the impact of agricultural research and development programmes, and to the need to improve the impact of these programmes to meet the global demand for greater food security, a scoping study was conducted to provide a basis for a project on ‘Impact Evaluation Approaches for Collaborative Agricultural Research and Development’.

Coordinated by the Institutional Learning and Change (ILAC) Initiative, an Inter-Centre Initiative hosted by Bioversity International, in collaboration with the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), an Australian university, and Research Into Use (RIU), a programme funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the study sought to follow up on the findings of an international workshop on ‘Rethinking Impact: Understanding the Complexity of Poverty and Change’, held in Colombia in March 2008. Research Into Use provided two small grants totalling $76,000 to support the scoping study and other collaborators provided in-kind contributions for staff time, as well as an additional estimated amount of $10,500 from the ILAC budget (provided through a grant from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs; DGIS) for consultancy fees and travel.

High on the list of findings was the need to develop ways of evaluating the impact of complicated programmes that involve a range of institutions, disciplines, situations, methodologies and goals, and complex programmes which are emergent and responsive to changing needs and opportunities. Such programmes are becoming the norm in the field of agricultural research and development, but the approaches used to evaluate their impact tend to be based on those used for the simple programmes predominant in the 1960s and 1970s which usually focused on crop improvement. Within the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), crop improvement programmes now account for only about 25% of the CGIAR research centres’ work, and the need for methodologies suited to evaluating the impact of complex programmes has become imperative.

The scoping study for the proposed impact evaluation project lasted from September 2008 to May 2009 and involved conducting a series of activities. These included:

• reviewing existing methodologies and other resources
• documenting the current status of impact evaluation in the CGIAR system
• conducting interviews with key informants
• identifying potential donors
• identifying and assessing possible case studies
• developing a design for the project
• preparing a funding proposal to submit to donor agencies

A proposal for funding the project, specifically for researching impact evaluation and developing methodologies over a 4-year period, was submitted to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in April 2009. The interest of other donors will continue to be investigated in order to scale up the project activities.
This report provides background information on the rationale for the proposed impact evaluation project and outlines the activities undertaken during the scoping study.
1 Background

**What is impact?**

…the positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. These effects can be economic, socio-cultural, institutional, environmental technological or of other types.

*Development Assistance Committee (DAC), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)*

This report summarises the work carried out during a scoping study for a major project on ‘Impact Evaluation Approaches for Collaborative Agricultural Research and Development’.

The scoping study was managed by Institutional Learning and Change (ILAC), an Inter-Centre Initiative hosted by Bioversity International, an institution within the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) system. ILAC worked in collaboration with the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), where the Collaboration for Interdisciplinary Research, Consulting and Learning in Evaluation (CIRCLE) is conducting research on evidence-based policy and practice, and with Research Into Use (RIU), a program funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) established to scale up research outputs from DFID’s Renewable Natural Resources Research Strategy (RNRRS) and to study the processes needed to facilitate RIU activities and their disaggregated impact in multiple contexts.

Within its mandate to improve the design and implementation of agricultural research and development programmes, specifically through organisational learning and institutional change, ILAC is seeking to address concerns being expressed that the current methods used to assess these programmes are inadequate. These concerns relate primarily to complex collaborative programmes involving a range of institutions, disciplines, situations, methodologies and goals.

The calls for new approaches for evaluating the impact of collaborative programmes voiced at an international workshop on ‘Rethinking Impact: Understanding the Complexity of Poverty and Change’, held in Cali, Colombia in March 2008, provided the motivation for the proposed project. The evolution of agricultural research since the 1960s, when it usually had the single goal of increasing crop yields, to the current position, where the goals have broadened to include not only increased food supplies but also poverty reduction, improved livelihoods and environmental sustainability, has not been accompanied by the required evolution in the methods used to evaluate the impact of this research. This is particularly the case with the approach used by CGIAR research centres.

Most impact evaluation in this field is based on an expert-review approach using a narrow set of methods, drawn from agricultural economics and predominantly quantitative, to estimate economic returns on investment. Whereas this approach might suit crop improvement programmes, it is not appropriate for most current agricultural research programmes. Within the CGIAR itself, it is estimated that only about 25% of its programmes focus on crop improvement, while more complicated and complex applied agricultural research accounts for 75% of their programmes. However, the guidelines drawn up by the CGIAR Science Council are still focused on economic methodologies, particularly experimental and quasi-
experimental designs, and econometric modelling, with little attempt to incorporate methods derived from other disciplines or from the field of evaluation more broadly.

The calls for improved impact evaluation approaches stem not only from the inadequacy of the CGIAR approach, but also from the need to meet the increasing demand from donors for evidence of impact. With the food crisis currently facing the world, agricultural research is very much back on the agenda, and new donor agencies and initiatives are emerging, making it imperative to find new impact evaluation approaches that cater for the complexity that now characterises many development interventions and for the need for transparency and credibility. Methodologically diverse and adaptable approaches, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis and addressing priority impact evaluation issues (such as learning, accountability, attribution, timing and participation), are needed.

Against this background, ILAC, RIU and RMIT pooled their resources with a grant from the RIU to undertake a scoping study to review existing methodologies and approaches, identify the needs, gaps and weakness in these approaches, consult key informants and organisations, identify potential donors and case studies, and design a project to develop new impact evaluation approaches better tailored to the structure and goals of most current agricultural research and development programmes. These approaches are not intended to replace current approaches, such as those used by the CGIAR, but rather to complement them. Based on the scoping study, a proposal was prepared and submitted to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in April 2009. This proposal requests funding support for a 4-year project (2010–2013) that seeks to develop and test more appropriate methods for:

- evaluating the impact of collaborative research involving multiple partners and/or participatory research involving farmers, researchers and others in the supply chain
- evaluating the broader range of impacts beyond economic returns, especially impact on poverty, livelihoods and environmental sustainability, taking into account the range of relevant disciplines involved
- evaluating the impact of more than a single technology or project, including combinations of technology and innovation platforms and capacity development
- dealing with the issue of causal inference that accommodates causal packages and causal mechanisms that operate only in particular contexts and are not well suited to counterfactual designs
- promoting the use of impact evaluation for learning and improvement, not just for retrospective justification and accountability

This report provides a summary of the scoping study activities, the potential cases identified for the main project, the experts and donor agencies consulted during the study, the presentations made at various meetings to promote the project concept and obtain feedback, and the main outputs and findings of the study. The report also provides an outline of the current status of impact evaluation in the CGIAR, some details on the members of the scoping study team, documents consulted for the study and some background information on the ILAC Initiative.
2 Study activities

The scoping study activities were conducted over a period of 9 months, from September 2008 to May 2009. The study was part of the first phase of the three-phase project on ‘Impact Evaluation Approaches for Collaborative Agricultural Research and Development’:

• Phase 1: scoping study and project design (9 months)
• Phase 2: impact evaluation research and methodology development (4 years)
• Phase 3: follow-up institutionalisation and capacity building (2–3 years)

The scoping study was intended to provide the basis for the design and funding proposal for the impact evaluation project. It involved conducting a wide range of activities, including:

• setting up a management system for the study; this involved forming the study team, establishing the partners’ roles (ILAC managing and co-ordinating activities, RMIT taking the lead in developing the portal and providing technical advice and inputs overall, and RIU providing funding support and advising on all aspects of the study activities) and allocating specific tasks to team members
• reviewing existing methodologies, online facilities, services and other resources supporting the impact evaluation of collaborative research; this involved identifying, retrieving and collating information, adding it to a database, highlighting the key issues and summarising the findings
• documenting the current status of impact evaluation in the CGIAR system, and assessing its strengths, weaknesses, needs and gaps; this involved consulting a range of publications and key informants, analysing the impact evaluation methods promoted by the CGIAR’s Special Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA), and synthesizing conclusions reached in recent studies of the CGIAR approach to impact evaluation
• conducting interviews with key informants to assess existing approaches, services and options; this involved compiling a list of stakeholders and potential partners (individual and institutional), scheduling interviews with them, developing the questions, conducting the interviews, following up suggestions for further interviews, identifying project partners and summarising the findings of this process
• identifying potential donors, prioritising them, developing a strategy to engage them, and contacting them; this involved assessing the likelihood of donors to be attracted by the project, identifying appropriate contact persons and arranging meetings to discuss the project plan
• identifying and assessing possible case studies for the project; this involved reviewing the ILAC Learning Laboratory cases and some other cases (not necessarily CGIAR-related), and interviewing representatives of the case teams to assess their interest in being involved in the ILAC project, their intended evaluation plans and outputs, and their likely contribution to the project
• setting up channels of communication and collaboration for the study and as a basis for the main project; this involved creating an area on the ILAC website to carry study resources, a stakeholder mailing list and facilities for feedback, as well as publicising the study objectives through workshop presentations and other networking opportunities
• developing a design for the project and preparing a fine-tuned funding proposal to submit to donor agencies; this involved setting up an advisory group, drafting the project design and proposal, revising them in the light of information and feedback from other activities,
redrafting the conceptual framework to meet contextual requirements of the project and producing the final proposal for submission to donors.

The main groups of potential project partners consulted during the scoping study were:

- managers of applied agricultural research and development programmes who wished to evaluate their programmes
- evaluation practitioners in the field of applied agricultural research and development
- people involved in other international initiatives working to improve the impact evaluation of collaborative agricultural research and development programmes
- people working to improve the impact evaluation of complex programmes in other sectors

A month-by-month schedule of activities was drawn up at outset of the scoping study, and status reports on what activities had been completed on schedule or needed further work were produced regularly. The project proposal was submitted to IFAD on 15 April 2009.
3 Potential cases for impact evaluation research

Since early 2008, ILAC been working with seven collaborative agricultural research for development programmes in the ILAC Learning Laboratory, most of them linked to the CGIAR. The majority of these programmes need, or wish, to carry out an impact evaluation. In some cases, the evaluation is required by donors, but in others the project teams wish to document project impact and to learn how it has (or has not) been achieved.

All these projects, as well as some additional projects not linked to the CGIAR, have been identified as potential cases for the impact evaluation project. Interviews were held with the project teams to assess specific issues in impact evaluation that could be addressed.

Table 1 summarises the key features of these cases. Annex 2 provides more detail on each case.

Table 1. Summary of potential impact evaluation cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Proponent</th>
<th>Focus and use</th>
<th>Methodological challenges</th>
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</table>
| Policy influences and farm-level impacts of a smallholder dairy R&D project in Eastern Africa § | International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) | *Focus*  
- Document ‘spillover’ of policy influence and impact across national boundaries  
- Estimate impact of project at household level  
*Intended users/users*  
ILRI and other agencies in this sector wish to use the results:  
- for advocacy and policy influence work  
- to understand mechanisms by which results obtained (or not), in order to improve programme | *Dealing with complex partnership issues (roles, giving credit)*  
*Missing baseline data for livelihood indicators – how to establish them now*  
*Evolution of project strategy, policies and practices (evolved from technology-focused project to one focused on institutional and policy change). How to disentangle and interpret all these changes?*  
*With resource limitations, need to select ‘representative’ milk supply chains – how to do this?* |
| Impacts of policy reform and regulatory enforcement in the African highlands § | African Highlands Initiative (AHI) (hosted by the World Agroforestry Center, ICRAF) | *Focus*  
- Policy changes in national and local institutions responsible for NRM  
- Changes in NRM status arising from improved enforcement of bylaws  
*Intended users/users*  
The intended users are policy-makers, R&D workers and training | *Remote sites with diverse social and bio-physical characteristics, in five countries*  
*Multiple intervention levels*  
*Methods for seeing how programme strategies have influenced policies and bylaw enforcement, local R&D activities and farmer behaviour* |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of empowerment in improving livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa</th>
<th>International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)</th>
<th>Focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>• Document strategies used to promote empowerment and resulting changes in empowerment</td>
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<td>• Assess links between empowerment and livelihoods</td>
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<td>IFAD aims to use the results to:</td>
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<td>• test new evaluation approaches</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• obtain information on how its projects contribute to empowerment and livelihood improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Resistance of project managers to conduct evaluation or use evaluative approaches in their work</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of baseline data</td>
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<td>• Need impact evaluation approaches that are low-cost and feasible</td>
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<tr>
<th>Role of networking in diffusing results of banana and plantain R&amp;D in Latin America and the Caribbean</th>
<th>Bioversity International</th>
<th>Focus</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>• Assess diffusion and use of recommended plantain technologies</td>
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<td>• Analyse network role of the network in technology diffusion and application</td>
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<td>• Resistance of participants to participate in evaluation</td>
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<td>• Continually shifting programme objectives and strategies</td>
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<tr>
<th>Institutional outcomes and farm-level impacts of Sasakawa – Global 2000 (SG2000) projects in Eastern Africa §</th>
<th>International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT)</th>
<th>Focus</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>• Outcomes at the level of participating national and local institutions</td>
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<td>• Outcomes at the level of the donors involved</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Impact at the level of farmers who have (or have not) benefited from the programme</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intended users/uses</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The main intended users are CIMMYT, SG2000, R&amp;D partners in Ethiopia, and the Government of Ethiopia. A key goal is to use the results for policy advocacy</td>
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<td>§</td>
<td>Intended users/uses</td>
<td>Focus</td>
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<td>Bioversity and members of MUSALAC want to understand: • how impact has or has not been achieved • the network’s role in technology diffusion</td>
<td>• Finding an impact evaluation approach appropriate for participatory research, which is adaptive and learning-oriented. • Evaluation of the ‘value added’ of the R&amp;D partnership • Going beyond evaluating specific interventions to evaluating a sequence (combination) of interventions over time in one locale • Applying the livelihoods framework in an impact evaluation • Doing evaluations that are effective in achieving policy influence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional impacts of interventions to build capacity for partnering and innovation in Tarlac, the Philippines §</td>
<td>Users’ Perspective with Agricultural Research and Development (UPWARD) (hosted by the International Potato Center, CIP)</td>
<td>• Benefits of R&amp;D work in Tarlac over past decade, particularly (a) livelihood impacts and (b) capacity strengthening and institutional impact</td>
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<td>• The main intended users are policy-makers who can influence resource allocations for sweet potato</td>
<td>• Lack of the evaluation knowledge, skills, time and resources within participating agencies, and lack of insight into knowledge-intensive agriculture among social scientists or evaluators who could do the work • Obtaining commitment of implementing agencies to do the evaluation</td>
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<td>Impacts of non-pesticide management practices in Andhra Pradesh, India</td>
<td>Xavier Institute of Management</td>
<td>Focus</td>
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<td>• Factors enabling fast learning and diffusion of new practices • Impact and benefits • Factors that could influence sustainability of practices and benefits</td>
<td>The main intended users are: • policy-makers and planners in the Department of Agriculture and the Planning Commission • donor agencies that have supported the work and could provide support in the work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study Area</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Focus</td>
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| Impacts of participatory plant breeding in Bolivia | Cambio Andino (Andean Change Initiative) (hosted by the International Potato Center, CIP) | Adoption and use of varieties resulting from PPB in 1990s | PROINPA wants to use the results to demonstrate the effectiveness of PPB. Cambio Andino wants to use them to:  
• improve its impact evaluation methods  
• demonstrate the effectiveness of PPB  
• generate information on PPB that could be used to promote it in the Andes and influence policy |
| Global impacts of capacity building and partnering for bamboo and rattan development | Internationa  
Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) | Global assessment of INBAR’s partnering and capacity building work | Lack of staff with the necessary evaluation knowledge, skills and experience |

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| Intended users/uses | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| PROINPA wants to use the results to demonstrate the effectiveness of PPB. Cambio Andino wants to use them to:  
• improve its impact evaluation methods  
• demonstrate the effectiveness of PPB  
• generate information on PPB that could be used to promote it in the Andes and influence policy |
| The main users are:  
• INBAR’s board and managers, to show partners and the public |

| Inadequate framework for a global evaluation |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| There are many missing baseline data on many variables |

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the impact to date and to guide future relationships with partners

• INBAR member country governments, to demonstrate achievements and discuss future collaboration
• current and potential partners, to use in discussion on achievements and future strategies

Note: the symbol § below the title of a case indicates that it is one the ILAC Learning Laboratory cases
4 People consulted

A SERIES OF KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS WAS HELD to analyse the status of impact assessment in the CGIAR with a focus on needs and gaps. Issues addressed included the range of topics assessed in past impact assessment studies and the methods used in those studies, to improve clarity about other poverty impact studies possibly conducted in the CGIAR, to identify other initiatives planned or ongoing with which a proposed project might collaborate or which might be duplicative, and to investigate impact evaluation policy issues.

The key informants consulted during the scoping study were:
- Alessandro Meschinelli, IFAD
- Andrew Benton, INBAR
- Anne-Marie Izac, CGIAR Alliance Office
- David Raitzer, CIFOR
- Derek Byerlee, Special Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA), CGIAR Science Council
- Douglas Pachico, CIAT
- Frances Seymore, CIFOR
- Hans Gregersen, SPIA, CGIAR Science Council
- Jeff Sayer, CGIAR Science Council
- Jessica Fanzo, Millennium Villages Project
- Jim Rugh, Independent Evaluation Expert
- Jock Anderson, World Bank
- Jon Andri Lys, KFPE
- Jonathan Wooley, Challenge Program for Water and Food (CPWF), CGIAR
- Lawrence Haddad, IDS
- Luigi Cuna, IFAD
- Mark Holderness, GFAR
- Meredith Giordano, IWMI
- Michael Patton, Independent Evaluation Expert
- Michelle Adato, IFPRI
- Oliver Oliveros, GFAR and DURAS
- Patricia Biermayr-Jenzano, Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis (PRGA), CGIAR
- Ruben Echeverría, CGIAR Science Council
- Ruth Meinzen-Dick, IFPRI
- Sirkka Immonen, Special Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation (SPME), CGIAR Science Council
- Steve Hall, CGIAR Chair, Alliance Executive
- Teunis Van Rheenan, IFPRI
- Timothy Kelley, SPIA, CGIAR Science Council
- Vicki Wilde, Gender and Diversity Program, CGIAR
- Victoria Henson-Apollonio, Central Advisory Office for Intellectual Property (CAS-IP), CGIAR
Potential case teams

Interviews were carried out with leaders of the Learning Laboratory teams and other CGIAR-related cases to assess their interest in being involved in the project and to include in the methods testing.

The assessment of interest included:

- current state and stage of the project
- impact domains being addressed by the project (particularly, but not limited to, the participation or collaboration issues) and the potential methods that could be trialled to address those domains
- project’s current plans for impact evaluation
- project’s unmet needs for impact evaluation
- limitations of existing impact evaluation approaches that should be addressed by the new project (that are not being met otherwise)
- availability of financial resources to cover the involvement of project staff, an external evaluator, and researchers
- availability of expertise and human resources from the case team to contribute to the methods testing
- opportunities for use of evaluation results (target audiences, potential use for learning and/or change, and timeframe for use)
- recommendations for any donors associated with the programme who might be approached to fund the larger methods development effort

Boru Douthwaite, Water and Food Challenge Program, CIAT
Coosje Hoogendoorn INBAR
David Raitzer, CIFOR
Dindo Campilan, UPWARD, CIP
Emma Rotondo, PREVAL Charles Staver, Bioversity International
Graham Thiele, Impact Enhancement Division, CIP
Guy Hareau, Impact Enhancement Division, CIP
Jeremias Mowo, African Highland Initiative, ICRAF
John Dixon, Impact Enhancement Division, formerly of CIMMYT
Julius Nyangaga, ILRI
Luis Pocasangre, Bioversity International
Roberto La Rovere, Impact Enhancement Division, CIMMYT
Wale Adekunle, Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Program, FARA

CGIAR Impact Assessment Specialists and other participants in the ILAC/RMIT presentation and discussion at the CGIAR’s IAFP and SPIA meeting in Brasilia, Brazil, November 2008

The following people attended a presentation by Patricia Rogers and Jamie Watts at the above mentioned meeting and provided feedback on the ideas presented.

Aliou Diagne, Africa Rice, CGIAR
David Raitzer, CIFOR
Debbie Templeton, ACIAR
Derek Byerlee, SPIA, CGIAR Science Council
Douglas Pachico, CIAT
Elisabetta Gotor, Bioversity International
Flavio Avila, EMBRAPA
Greg Traxler, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Guy Hareau, CIP
James Stevenson, Oxfam GB
John Dixon, Senior Advisor, ACIAR
Jupiter Ndjeunga, ICRISAT
Kamel Shideed, ICARDA
Mywish Maredia, SPIA, CGIAR Science Council
Nancy Johnson, ILRI
Patrick Eozenou, HarvestPlus Challenge Program, CGIAR
Paul Heisey, USDA
Roberto La Rovere, CIMMYT
Ruben Echeverria, CGIAR Science Council
Sirkka Immonen, CGIAR Science Council
Steve Franzel, World Agroforestry Center
Teunis Van Rhenen, IFPRI
Timothy Kelley, SPIA, CGIAR Science Council
Tom Walker, Independent Consultant
Victor Manyong, IITA
Wale Adekunle, Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Program, FARA

Participants in the Annual General Meeting presentation by Patricia Rogers, Sheelagh O’Reilly and Jamie Watts

The following people attended the above presentation where questions were posed and ideas exchanged about the proposed project.

Adepala Ekwamu, Ru Forum
Alessandro Rizzo, IRD-Institute de la Recherche pour la Development
Charles Crissman, CIP
Chebet Maikut, EAFF
Christian Borgemeister, ICIPE
David Raitzer, CIFOR
David Williams, SGRP
Derek Byerlee, SC, CGIAR
Hannah Jaeniche, Crops for the Future / ICUC
Howard Elliott, IAASTD Independent Evaluation
Iwasaki Kaoru, JIRCAS
Jacqueline Sawyer, CIP
John McDermott, ILRI
Kwesi Atta-Krah, Bioversity
Maarten Van Ginkel, ICARDA
Margaret Kroma, CGIAR Gender & Diversity / AWARD
Maria Iskandarani, CGIAR Secretariat
Mark Holderness, GFAR
Niels Louwaars, Wageningen University
Pamela George, Challenge Programme for Water & Food
Patricia Biermayr, PRGA
Peter Ballantyne, ICT-KM consultant
Ralph Van Kalpmann, FARA
Sanni Lateef, Federal Univ. of Agric, Ablokuta, Nigeria, IITA
Shantanu Mathur, IFAD
Sidi Sanyang, FARA
Simone Staiger, CGIAR / ICT-KM
Vicki Wilde, CGIAR Gender & Diversity Programme
Victoria Henson-Apollonio, CGIAR CAS-IP
Wale Adakunle, SSA-CP FARA
5 Donor contacts

Potential donors for the impact evaluation project were identified and prioritised, and a strategy to engage them was then developed. The initial contact was mainly to discuss the project plan and to assess whether the donor agency was interested in being involved in the project. Subsequent meetings with interested donors involved a full assessment of their commitment, and insight gained from these meetings was fed back into revisions of the project design and proposal.

The donor agencies contacted included:

ACIAR  Contact person: Debbie Templeton  
DFID  Contact person: Jonathan Wadsworth  
DGIS-NL  Contact person: Jeroen Rijniers  
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation  Contact persons: Prabhu Pingali and Greg Traxler  
IDRC  Contact persons: Fred Carden and Jean Lebel  
IFAD  Contact persons: Rodney Cooke, Shantanu Mathur and Alessandro Meschinelli  
NORAD / NORAGRIC  Contact person: Ruth Haug  
Rockefeller Foundation  Contact person: Nancy MacPherson  
World Bank  Contact person: Jock Anderson
6 Presentations

During the scoping study, members of the study team attended several meetings and workshops on topics related to impact evaluation and gave presentations on the background to the proposed impact evaluation project and on the project plan itself. The main presentations are outlined here.

Presentation: Four key tasks in impact assessment of complex interventions

Venue: Bioversity International, Rome, Italy; 26 September 2008

This presentation was based on a presentation by Dr Patricia Rogers (RMIT) at the international workshop on ‘Rethinking Impact’ in Colombia, 26-28 March 2008, organised by the CGIAR Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis (PRGA) in collaboration with ILAC and ILRI.

Dr Rogers opened with a definition of impact evaluation, a description of the increasing demand for it, and an outline of the different types of impact evaluation in terms of purpose and timing and of the type of intervention – simple, complicated or complex – being assessed. She suggested that there are four main tasks in impact evaluation:

• deciding which impacts to include in the evaluation (conceptualising valued impact)
• gathering evidence of impact (describing and measuring impact)
• analysing causal attribution or contribution
• synthesizing and reporting the results, to support their use

Each task requires appropriate methods. The challenge in selecting and applying these methods is particularly difficult in complex (usually collaborative) interventions, which is the subject of the proposed project.

Presentation: Impact evaluation approaches for collaborative research and development: a proposal being developed by ILAC, RIU and RMIT

Venue: CGIAR IAFP and SPIA meeting on ‘Defining and Refining Good Practice in Ex-Post Impact Assessment’; EMBRAPA, Brasilia, Brazil; 10–11 November 2008

Following an outline of ILAC’s goals, activities and leading partners, Jamie Watts (ILAC) and Dr Patricia Rogers (RMIT) described the main objectives of the proposed impact evaluation project – to improve the impact evaluation of collaborative agricultural research programmes and to add to the toolbox of impact evaluation methodologies. She noted the IFPRI/SPIA conclusions that these methodologies should:

• enable analysis at different scales
• increase understanding of the inherent complexity of livelihoods
• use complimentary quantitative and qualitative methods and mixed disciplines
• foster critical self analysis and learning from experiences, positive and negative

With 75% of CGIAR research now outside traditional crop improvement, new impact evaluation approaches are needed, a point emphasized at the international workshop in Colombia on ‘Rethinking Impact’ in March 2008 and reinforced by SPIA’s Impact Assessment Guidelines which recognise the gaps in existing methodologies. The presenters outlined how the project would seek to address these needs, and listed some core questions the project would seek to answer, including:

• What are the specific contributions of collaborative research projects to impact?
• How can attribution be assessed in collaborative research projects?
• What range of impacts can be attributed to the collaborative research projects being assessed?
• How can the impact evaluation process combine the expertise and approaches of a variety of disciplines?
• How can the impact evaluation process be used to stimulate learning and change?

Presentation: Methodological issues in assessing the impact of collaborative agricultural R&D


This presentation by Dr Patricia Rogers (RMIT) and Jamie Watts (ILAC) sought to outline a broader range of impact evaluation options for those agricultural research and development programmes where traditional counter-factual approaches are not appropriate. With many programmes becoming more complex, with multiple components, multiple causal strands and multiple agencies working collaboratively, it is necessary to adapt or develop methods that better capture the impact of these programmes, to meet the needs and expectations of both donors and beneficiaries.

The methodological issues outlined included deciding what programme components and dimensions to evaluate, who to involve in this decision, what approaches to use, how to analyse causal attribution or contribution and how to involve and report to the programme stakeholders. Topics touched on included programme theory (impact pathway), participatory evaluation (e.g., Most Significant Change), utilisation-focused evaluation, developmental evaluation and translational research.

Presentation: Impact evaluation approaches for collaborative agricultural R&D

Venue: CGIAR AGM, Maputo, Mozambique; 30 November 2008

The starting point of this presentation was that if the work of agricultural scientists is to be effective, they need to liaise with ‘end-users’ of all kinds. Dr Sheelagh O’Reilly (RIU) looked at different types of collaboration, including ‘conventional’ research (where scientists decide, without the organised participation of end-users), ‘consultative’ research (scientists decide, but with organised communication with end-users), ‘collaborative’ research (scientists and end-users share decision-making) and ‘end user experimentation’ (farmers decide, without the organised involvement of scientists). She summarised the arguments in favour of engaging end-users (farmers, policy-makers, etc.) and elaborated on the challenges in knowledge adaptation, noting that researchers are sometimes reluctant to ‘let go’ of their outputs for others to adapt and re-use.

Dr Patricia Rogers (RMIT) discussed an approach used in the health sector, called ‘translational research’, and looked at its potential for agriculture. It can be seen as a way to bridge the gap between scientists and end-users, and to encourage ongoing learning-oriented interaction, which is more likely to lead to the successful use and adaptation of research results. She then outlined the phases of the proposed impact evaluation project.

Presentation: Use of impact evaluation for organisational learning and policy influence: The case of international agricultural research

This presentation was divided into three parts:

1. Use and non-use of impact evaluation: The CGIAR case; *presented by Douglas Horton and Ronald Mackay (Independent Evaluation Consultants in the ILAC Initiative)*

2. Towards a broader range of impact evaluation methods for collaborative research: Report on a work in progress; *presented by Dr Patricia Rogers (RMIT) and Jamie Watts (ILAC)*

3. Role of impact evaluation in moving from research into use; *presented by Dr Sheelagh O’Reilly (RIU)*

After the presentation, Robert Chambers, a leading development expert and an advisor to the ILAC Initiative, was asked to give his reaction. This was followed by a question-and-answer session and further discussion.

Opening with an overview of impact evaluation in the CGIAR, the first paper discussed factors influencing the use of evaluation results, particularly the extent to which the intended users are engaged in the process, the types and levels of use, the attention given to use and the four ‘I’s’ that influence decisions on use – interests, ideologies, institutions, information. It concluded with suggestions for enhancing the use of impact evaluation, which include shifting from method-driven to theory-driven evaluation, using a mixture of evaluation methods (both quantitative and qualitative) and improving the communication of impact evaluation results.

The second paper examined the need for more options in evaluating the impact of agricultural research in response to wider research mandates, the changing role of researchers and the growing trends towards collaborative research and end-user involvement in research and evaluation. It looked at the various impact evaluation tasks, how interventions can be classed as simple, complicated or complex, the challenges this presents for impact evaluation and how to address these challenges.

The question posed in the third paper was: How can innovation-system approaches promote greater use of research-based knowledge? It suggested that there was a need to maximise the poverty-reducing impact of previous research on natural resources and to better understand how these approaches help reduce poverty while ensuring effective natural resources management. The challenges here for impact evaluation are to identify ‘critical success’ factors and develop coherent approaches for identifying ‘potential winners’ among research outputs.
7  Main outputs

The main outputs of the scoping study were:

• a proposal to IFAD for a project on ‘Impact Evaluation Approaches for Collaborative Agricultural Research and Development’ (including the full proposal, logframe and the associated President’s Report needed for the IFAD review and decision processes)

• a generic proposal to be used for communication purposes and for further fund raising, describing the project objectives, scope, target groups and beneficiaries, background and rationale, strategy and approach, activities, outcomes and outputs, management and partners, duration and budgetary requirements

• the document presenting the initial design of the structure for a web portal for impact evaluation, providing access to tools, methods and approaches, with the structure based on a decision tree tool to help users select which tools and methods to apply in particular situations

There was also a range of secondary outputs, including:

• presentations at sessions during conferences and workshops between September 2008 and March 2009 (see description of presentations above)

• a background paper on the history of impact evaluation in the CGIAR, to support the project proposal to IFAD (see Annex 1)

• the selection and description of potential impact evaluation cases to be included in the project (see Table 1 and Annex 2)

Project design and proposal

The objective of the impact evaluation project is to improve the impact evaluation of collaborative agricultural research in order to enhance the contribution of this research to development. It will involve reviewing and synthesizing existing knowledge, conducting studies aimed at producing new knowledge, insights and methodologies, and building institutional capacities to implement these methodologies.

The rationale for the project is to facilitate change, as part of the CGIAR reform process, so that the direction of future collaborative agricultural research is clearly embedded in pro-poor principles. As such, it reflects the strategic objectives of IFAD, to whom it submitted the project proposal in April 2009. IFAD’s objectives are:

• to promote pro-poor research on innovative approaches and technological options to enhance field-level impact

• to build the pro-poor capacities of partner institutions, including CBOs and NGOs

The project is expected to benefit IFAD in several ways, including strengthening its long-standing partnership with the CGIAR and guiding its future investment decisions for agricultural research. The amount requested from IFAD’s Grants Programme is $1,000,000, to cover costs relating to personnel, travel, publications and communications, workshops and meetings, supplies and services, consultancies and overheads, with co-financing amounting to $655,000 being sought from other sources.

The project is designed to last for 4 years (2010–2013) and to benefit agricultural research worldwide, the particular target groups being: managers, funders and evaluators of
agricultural research and development programmes; policy-makers; and poor farmers, the ultimate beneficiaries of the project. The proposed project will focus on:

- compiling and synthesizing existing impact evaluations of agricultural research
- developing an online resource portal to enable evaluation practitioners to select and apply appropriate methodologies
- conducting exemplary impact evaluations of agricultural research programmes and synthesizing the results (the scale and number of impact evaluations will vary, depending on the needs of the specific case studies and on funding)
- providing training and technical support on impact evaluation approaches to evaluators and researchers in agricultural research institutions
- promoting better evaluation policies and practices in these institutions by targeting policy-makers and donors with relevant information

The project will be implemented by the ILAC Initiative with administrative support and hosting provided by Bioversity International. All the project outputs (publications, online resources, workshops, training and informational products) will be available as global public goods. Intellectual property will be assigned jointly to Bioversity International and the project partners, including IFAD. A steering committee, with the following membership, will meet annually to review and advise on the annual work plans and budgets:

- Alliance of CGIAR research centres
- GFAR
- a member of the CGIAR Science Council
- Bioversity International senior management

Robert Chambers, a long-standing advisor to the ILAC Initiative (or another eminent person), will be invited to be a member of the committee, and IFAD and other donors will be invited to participate as observers.

The CGIAR Consortium will assume leadership of CGIAR monitoring and evaluation functions during the 4-year life of the project and will provide core funding for these activities. To facilitate the institutionalisation of project activities, the CGIAR Consortium will start assuming financial responsibility for the project, by covering half of the staffing costs in 2012 and 2013.

**Impact evaluation portal**

The rationale for the impact evaluation portal is that it will be part of a learning strategy, giving people the information they need to review and, where appropriate, change their approach to impact evaluation. The portal will provide access to resources, including tools, approaches and methodologies, as well as a ‘help desk’. The information gained from the project’s impact evaluation cases will provide the examples in the database. The main intended users are agricultural research programme managers and evaluators.

The web portal structure will be based on a decision tree database organised around the tasks in the evaluation process. The decision tree branches and sub-branches will represent the evaluation tasks, which are seen as:

- scoping out the evaluation
- conceptualising the intervention
• identifying what is valued
• measuring and describing
• analysing causal contributions
• reporting
• supporting use

For each task there will be information on what needs to be done, what decisions need to be taken and what tools and other resources are available. The online toolkit is intended to help evaluators select the appropriate tools they need for impact evaluation in a specific situation.

For each tool there will be a brief description, an analysis of its possible uses, advantages and disadvantages, an example of its use, and links to further reading and other examples. Users are invited to add examples, suggest changes to the descriptions, add further references and comments, and suggest additional tools and approaches. It is hoped that, with these contributions, the toolkit will grow over time.

The contents of the toolkit will build on an earlier RMIT research project on impact evaluation which is now being developed by the Collaboration for Interdisciplinary Research, Consulting and Learning in Evaluation (CIRCLE) unit at RMIT as part of the proposed impact evaluation project, with funding and research contributions from RIU.

The scoping study identified three main issues relating to the development of the portal:
• the need to involve, from the outset, IT experts from the host website as members of the project team
• the need for ongoing portal maintenance, updating and support beyond the life of the project
• the need to conduct research critical to building an effective database, specifically on:
  - programme/project categorisation, so as to get the database entry level correct (although the notion of the ‘simple-complicated-complex’ categorisation has been proposed as a starting point, it might be advisable develop a global evaluation scale in order to capture the unique essence of many CGIAR projects)
  - what overall theory of change will be used to improve impact evaluation and where the database fits into it
  - what the requirements of the database users are and how they will be met (many databases are under-used because time has not been taken during their development to involve actual potential users)
8 Main findings

In order to assess the needs, gaps and issues in impact evaluation in the CGIAR system, a number of sources were reviewed during the scoping study. In addition to many individual publications on the subject (see Annex 5), these sources included:

- CGIAR Impact Assessment database
- IFPRI Poverty Impact Study
- Report of IAFP meeting, November 2008
- Report of ILAC workshop, 2003
- RIW documentation
- SPIA Impact Assessment Guidelines

From this review, four main findings emerged. The findings are outlined here, with the citation details given in the bibliography in Annex 6.

1. Lack of comprehensive thematic coverage of CGIAR impact evaluation

Most of CGIAR’s impact evaluations focus on research on crop genetic improvement. Few concern research on crop and integrated pest management, livestock, natural resources management, post-harvest issues, policy and gender (ILAC et al., 2008; Walker et al., 2008; CGIAR Science Council, 2009), and evaluation of the impact on complex social, economic and environmental situations has been largely ignored (Kristjanson et al., 2008; CGIAR Impact Website, 2009).

The only impact evaluation method that is fully institutionalised in the CGIAR is the economic rate-of-return (ERR) method (Walker et al., 2008). This method is best suited to a narrow range of research processes, restricting the range of themes that can be evaluated. As only about 25% of the CGIAR research budget is used for crop improvement (CGIAR Secretariat, 2007), this means that large portions of CGIAR research remain inadequately assessed, in many cases because an unsuitable ERR approach has been applied (ILAC et al., 2008). Participants in the international workshop on ‘Rethinking Impact’, held in Colombia in March 2008, called for the use of a broader range of methods drawn from the fields of social sciences and programme evaluation to fill this gap (Kristjanson et al., 2008).

2. Need for methods to evaluate the impact of complex, multi-dimensional research

Donors, partners and end-users increasingly call for evidence that CGIAR research is contributing significantly to poverty reduction, food security, food quality and environmental protection. Impact evaluation of research that aims to deliver on these broad goals needs to analyse a wide variety of factors, but to date few studies have adequately assessed this type of complexity (Kristjanson et al., 2008; Walker et al., 2008). Among those that have attempted it was one on the impact of CGIAR research on poverty alleviation (Hazell and Haddad, 2001; Adato and Meinzen-Dick, 2002; Meinzen-Dick et al., 2004). It used the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) to evaluate research impact on a broad asset base (natural, financial and social), with the authors arguing that impact on livelihoods can be evaluated only by mixing quantitative and qualitative methods (e.g., panel surveys, interviews and focus groups) drawn from a range of disciplines (e.g., sociology, anthropology and economics).
This view was echoed at the international workshop on ‘Rethinking Impact’ and at a CGIAR IAFP meeting (Kristjanson et al., 2008; CGIAR Science Council, 2009). Other authors argue that because impact occurs in complex systems involving many people and varied interactions, evaluation needs analyse the processes that generate impact as well as the impact itself, and that relying exclusively on economic methods to evaluate impact misses important non-economic factors and paths of achievement (Ekboir, 2003; Hall et al., 2003; Horton and Mackay, 2003).

3. Need for methods to evaluate the impact of multi-institutional collaborative research

International research organisations such as the CGIAR increasingly operate on a multi-institutional collaborative basis to tackle the complicated issues inherent in much current research. The Agricultural Innovation System (AIS) is seen by many to be an appropriate framework for assessing such research. Key features of an innovation system include (Mytelka, 2000):

- multiple knowledge bases (including formal research, but not limited to it)
- adaptive capacity to handle innovation in changing environments
- interactions shaped by institutions and policies, affecting the way people and institutions behave
- continuous adaptation to evolving, specific, local conditions

Viewing agricultural research from an AIS perspective presents challenges to impact evaluation. Collaborative research often involves capacity development as well as research per se. As traditional impact evaluation methods are ill suited for assessing capacity building and the processes that produce impact, new methods are needed to evaluate the roles of collaborating partners and their contributions to impact. Impact often results from partners’ joint efforts or the synergies between them, making it inappropriate to attempt to link impact to the activities of specific partners (Ekboir, 2003).

4. Need for impact evaluation approaches that stimulate learning and change

The main purpose of most ex-post impact evaluation studies in the CGIAR is to demonstrate success to donors (Malton, 2003; Kristjanson et al., 2008). Focusing on success stories in the current environment of scarce resources for evaluation tends to exclude more critical evaluations of what does, and does not, work. The CGIAR Science Council, donors and others are now calling for impact evaluation to be practised as a process of critical analysis and reflection that fosters learning and is linked to improving current and future research (Chambers, 2003; Matlon, 2003; Walker et al., 2008; CGIAR Science Council, 2009).

The IFPRI poverty studies concluded that to respond adequately to the poor, research needs to adopt a more client-oriented, problem-solving approach that involves acknowledging mistakes and learning from them (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2004). Some authors argue that the challenge here lies not only in methodological approaches, but also in embedding them in institutional culture and practice (Hall et al., 2003; Matlon, 2003; Adato and Meinzen-Dick, 2007a, b; Rijniers, 2008).
Annex 1: Impact evaluation in the CGIAR

The CGIAR has a long tradition of economic impact evaluation studies, with their disciplinary roots in agricultural economics research. The economic rationale for investing in agricultural research played a key role in encouraging the World Bank and other donors to establish the CGIAR in the early 1970s. Hundreds of studies of the returns on investments in agricultural research and development have since been conducted, many of them associated with the CGIAR. An analysis by Alston et al. (2000) of nearly 300 such studies found that they gave an incomplete and sometimes misleading picture; it also noted the concentration of rate-of-return studies in the area of crop improvement, with far fewer studies on the impact of research in such areas as agronomy, fisheries, forestry, livestock and natural resources management.

In recent years, economists affiliated to the CGIAR have made advances in impact evaluation theory and methods and in broadening the areas studied. Pingali (2001) wrote that “the scope of impacts work done at the [CGIAR] centers has expanded from a narrow effort to measure the adoption of modern varieties to research quantifying a wide array of impacts on production, productivity, equity, human health, and the environment.” The most thoroughly assessed area of CGIAR work, however, remains crop improvement.

In response to donor requests for improvements in evaluation and impact evaluation, the CGIAR established the Impact Assessment and Evaluation Group (IAEG) in 1995, subsequently transformed into two separate panels reporting to the newly created CGIAR Science Council: the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) and the Standing Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation (SPME). SPIA has focused its attention on ex-post impact evaluation. In a recent self-examination of SPIA’s work, Kelley et al. (2008) outlined the Panel’s activities and achievements and presented lessons learned with regard to methodologies for generating credible and relevant impact evaluation results. They noted that ex-post impact evaluation places the emphasis on accountability and strategic validation, rather than on learning and programme improvement, commenting that the SPIA model “appears to have been an effective instrument in helping the CGIAR generate a larger and more credible body of evidence to satisfy the accountability imperative of investors”.

In their overview of the history of impact evaluation in the CGIAR, prepared in the aftermath of the international workshop on ‘Rethinking Impact’ in March 2008 in Colombia and used as a background paper for this scoping study, Horton and Mackay (2008) explore the rationale for, and disciplinary roots of, impact evaluation in international agricultural research. Entitled ‘What drives evaluation practice? The CGIAR experience’, the paper looks at the early development of the CGIAR evaluation approach, based as it was on meeting the need for accountability. With the consolidation and growth of the CGIAR in the 1980s, donors began calling for better evidence of the impact of international agricultural research, but evaluation studies remained rooted in a quantitative approach measuring economic performance, largely ignoring the emerging ‘soft’ areas of research-related activities (e.g., farming systems research, participatory technology development and capacity building). The decline in donor funding in the 1990s brought a new urgency to the need to provide evidence of impact in order to attract funding, the CGIAR seeing impact evaluation as a way of justifying investment, raising public awareness, mobilising resources and setting priorities for future resource allocation.

Since 2000, while core funding has continued to decline, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other new donors have begun to provide significant funding for CGIAR
projects that promise quick and measurable impact on food security, poverty and the environment. In a paper commissioned by the CGIAR to review programme impact evaluation, Leeuw (2001) identified three challenges for CGIAR impact evaluation:

- how to assess the impact of activities, programmes, interventions or policies in a world where partnerships and collaborative arrangements involving different types of organisations have become the norm
- how the choice of method can affect the results of an evaluation, and how to deal with this
- how to account for the unintended and undesirable effects that can jeopardise the contribution of impact evaluations to the impact of an intervention

Horton and Mackay (2008) note that although these challenges were highly relevant to the CGIAR, little note was taken of them at the time, and concern grew about the approach to impact evaluation adopted by the IAEG and, subsequently, SPIA. One result of this was the establishment of ILAC in 2003 by a group of professionals with long experience of the CGIAR system. With its focus on fostering learning and improvement in agricultural research, ILAC’s work is oriented towards collaborative and participatory research and it is now playing a key role in highlighting the shortcomings in the CGIAR approach to evaluating the impact of such research.

As the CGIAR has evolved and its programmes have changed in focus and structure, new evaluation practices have been added, but old ones have been retained, resulting in a complex set of overlapping evaluation procedures. Three main evaluation systems can be discerned: an institutional evaluation system that emphasises accountability; *ad hoc* project evaluations that tend to use the methods dictated by the donors and lean heavily towards accountability; and programme-based evaluations conducted to support learning and programme improvement and using a variety of frameworks and methods.

What is needed to bring change, coherence and relevance to impact evaluation procedures in international agricultural research in general, and in the CGIAR in particular, is not only ‘rethinking impact’ (the focus of the Colombia workshop), but also ‘taking action’. Horton and Mackay (2008) suggest four main areas of action, relating to:

- **Influences and opportunities outside the CGIAR**: being better informed about issues and forces outside the CGIAR, particularly among key donor organisations; linking with evaluation professionals to learn more about evaluation trends, controversies, approaches and methods; studying ‘good evaluation practice’ among donor organisations such as IDRC, IFAD and SDC
- **Nature of contemporary research programmes**: developing and making available more appropriate methods for evaluating the 75% of CGIAR programme activities whose impact cannot be evaluated adequately using core CGIAR methods
- **Role of key actors**: recognising the importance of key individuals and decision-makers in the CGIAR; using well-crafted strategies to influence decision-making; becoming more familiar with recent work on evaluation use, sustainability science and research-policy links that provides insight into how to make information more influential in decision-making processes
- **Organisational culture and rules**: encouraging the CGIAR to become a more open, inclusive, learning organisation; building its institutional capacity for learning-oriented programme evaluation; developing programme evaluation as a legitimate and important discipline within the CGIAR, located centrally within programmes, rather than on their margins.
Annex 2: Summary of potential cases

By the end of the scoping study, expressions of interest in participating in the impact evaluation project had been received from nine programmes, as shown in Table 1 earlier. The information gathered on these programmes and their proposed evaluations is summarised here.

Policy influences and farm-level impacts of a smallholder dairy R&D project in Eastern Africa

Background: The smallholder dairy project was a collaborative R&D project carried out between 1995 and 2003. The key partners were ILRI, the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) and the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development. Other partners played smaller, but significant, roles in the project. The project’s strategy evolved over time from an initial technology-focused one to one centred on institutional and policy change.

Focus: Although the essential work of the project was carried out in Kenya, it is believed that many project lessons and approaches have ‘spilled over’ to other countries in the region. The impact evaluation would (a) document the diffusion process from Kenya to other countries and (b) assess the project impact in other countries at the household level.

Intended users/uses: ILRI and others who are currently active in this type of work in follow-up projects want to use this evaluation to (a) ascertain the extent of benefits from the project in neighbouring countries, (b) use the results for advocacy and policy influence work, and (c) understand the mechanisms by which the results have, or have not, been obtained, in order to improve programme strategies in future.

Methodological challenges:

- How to deal with complex partnership work (roles, giving credit)
- How to establish ‘baselines’ now? It is known what the policies were at the outset, but there is no household-level data on livelihoods
- The project strategy evolved over time. The changes in policy and practice were gradual, with constant adjustments, reflecting many causal factors. How to disentangle these changes in the intervention, in both the policy sphere and the milk supply chains
- Resource limitations means that only some milk supply chains can be studied. How to select ‘representative’ ones?

Timing: The aim is to complete the impact evaluation by mid-2010.

Impacts of policy reform and regulatory enforcement in the African highlands

Background: The African Highlands Initiative (AHI), founded in 1995, is an ecoregional programme of the CGIAR and the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) network hosted by ICRAF. It aims to improve livelihoods and reverse natural resource degradation in the densely settled highlands of Eastern and Central Africa. AHI works with local communities, local government and development partners in Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Its core role is to develop innovative methods and approaches for participatory integrated natural resource management (INRM) through their development and testing in pilot sites, cross-site synthesis
and regional dissemination and institutionalisation. AHI's targeted beneficiaries and partners include national and international research organisations and networks, development organisations, local government, civil society organisations, service providers, policy-makers, CBOs and farmers.

**Focus:** The evaluation would focus on interventions aimed at policy reform and the enforcement of bylaws in Ethiopia (Ginchi and Areka Districts), Tanzania (Lushoto) and Uganda (Kabale and Kapchorwa). Specific topics for the evaluation include:

- level of involvement of the target population in policy reforms and in formulating and enforcing bylaws
- level of awareness of key players (e.g., courts, police, politicians) of INRM policies and relevant bylaws
- changes in natural resources status arising from improved enforcement of relevant bylaws
- changes within institutions (local and formal) responsible for INRM

**Intended users / uses:** The main intended users of the evaluation results are policy-makers, R&D workers, training centres and colleges.

**Methodological challenges:**

- Multiple, often remote, sites with diverse social and biophysical characteristics scattered across five countries
- Multiple intervention levels
- Need for methods to evaluate how the programme has influenced changes in farmers’ behaviour, changes in R&D organisations, and changes in policies and in the enforcement and implementation of bylaws and regulations

**Timing:** Ideally, the evaluation would be carried out between late 2009 and March 2010.


**Background:** For nearly a decade and a half, the Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) has collaborated with the Global 2000 programme of the Carter Center to find ways to improve the productivity of African farmers. The Carter Center's mission is to encourage sustainable development and the equitable and responsible use of resources by promoting food self-reliance, improving health and the environment, and encouraging sound population policies. SAA spearheads efforts to modernise the techniques that small farmers use to produce food and helps farmers organise themselves to get credit, acquire inputs and market their harvests more successfully. Global 2000 focuses on overcoming policies that repress farming and hinder economic activity. The joint programme is known as SG2000. In 2006, CIMMYT began managing a knowledge and monitoring system for SG2000 under a contract that ends in 2010. A grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is expected to allow an extension of the evaluation work.

**Focus:** The proposed evaluation project would support the learning effort, ensuring its critical assessment, external reviews by independent specialists and the publication and sharing of results in international fora. The work would be done mainly in Ethiopia, and would look at the results of SG2000 at three levels:

- outcomes at the level of participating national and local institutions
• effects at the level of the donors involved
• impacts at the level of farmers who have (or have not) benefited from the programme

*Intended users / uses:* The main intended users are CIMMYT, SG2000, R&D partners in Ethiopia and the government of Ethiopia. A key goal is to use the evaluation results for policy advocacy.

*Methodological challenges:*

The main initial challenge was the resistance of the evaluated institutions (SAA/SG 2000) to engage in a learning-oriented evaluation process. Based on previous experience with evaluation, they saw this as the job of ‘external experts’. Another challenge has been dealing with the shifting objectives and strategies of SAA/SG2000, particularly when the programme engaged recently in a large fundraising effort with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

*Timing:* The evaluation would be carried out between late 2010 and late 2012. This coincides with the closing of the current SG2000 investment phase, the beginning of a new phase, and a mid-term self-evaluation of this phase.

**Role of empowerment in improving livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa**

*Background:* Most of IFAD’s projects in Africa are oriented toward poverty reduction and involve multi-organisational collaboration. Empowerment is an issue that has received considerable attention in recent projects, but there is a lack of clarity about the meaning of empowerment, how to promote it and how it relates to livelihoods.

*Focus:* The evaluation would examine the strategies used to promote empowerment, the resulting changes in empowerment and the links between changes in empowerment and livelihoods in one IFAD project (to be determined) in sub-Saharan Africa.

*Intended users / uses:* IFAD hopes to use the evaluation to (a) test new evaluation approaches and (b) obtain initial information on how its project could contribute to empowerment and, indirectly, to livelihood improvement.

*Methodological challenges:*

• IFAD tends to focus its evaluations at a high level (i.e., broad country-level studies, rather than detailed project-level ones)
• It is difficult to motivate project managers to do more evaluation work or take a more evaluative approach to their work; they do not see evaluations as useful to them, and regard evaluations as an ‘add on’ to their normal activities
• General lack of baseline data for IFAD projects
• Need an impact evaluation approach that is low-cost and feasible in the current setting

*Timing:* Not defined.

**Role of networking in diffusing the results of banana and plantain R&D in Latin America and the Caribbean**

*Background:* Bioversity International is partnering with research institutes in the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Panamá and Venezuela to improve plantain productivity and farm incomes among smallholders. Interventions include technical innovation, strengthening plantain processing capacity, improving small growers’ business organisation and facilitating
knowledge sharing via a collaborative platform. This work is supported by a grant from the Fondo Regional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (FONTAGRO) for the period 2008–2011.

**Focus:** The proposed evaluation would have two main components: (a) documenting the diffusion and use of the recommended plantain production; and (b) analysing the role of the plantain and banana research network, MUSALAC, in the diffusion and application of the technology. Due to the regional nature of the programme, the evaluation will be multi-site and multi-country.

**Intended users / uses:** The main intended users are MUSALAC members and Bioversity managers, to understand how impact has/has not been achieved and the role of the network in technology diffusion. Other intended users include workers in national R&D programmes, to understand how to target technologies more effectively to farmers’ needs.

**Methodological challenges:**

- Lack of baseline data (due to lack of resources, technical expertise and clarity about data needs)
- How to define and study target population in such diverse environments
- How to conduct a useful evaluation of a complex, regional programme with limited resources

**Timing:** The aim is to conduct the evaluation in 2010.

**Regional impacts of interventions to build capacity for partnering and innovation in Tarlac, the Philippines**

**Background:** The Users’ Perspective with Agricultural Research and Development (UPWARD) network has operated since 1991 as CIP’s Asia-wide programme for participatory research. Its main focus has been to test and promote the use of participatory and collaborative R&D approaches to foster pro-poor innovation in root crop-based livelihoods. UPWARD has worked on (a) enhancing the pro-poor orientation of support services, market access and policies, (b) understanding and capturing new impact and (c) capacity development and partnership building. Network partners include research organisations, universities, NGOs, public-sector extension agencies and local government units in 11 Asian countries. A long-standing partner is the Tarlac College of Agriculture (TCA) in the Philippines. Since 1998, TCA and UPWARD have worked on a series of local sweet potato projects, integrated crop management and value chain enhancement. One of the main areas of interest here has been scaling up with measures that benefit poor sweet potato producers and those involved in the market chain.

**Focus:** This evaluation will look at the benefits of work carried out in Tarlac over the past decade. Impact will be assessed at two levels: (a) livelihood impact at the household level; and (b) capacity strengthening and institutional impact at the level of participating R&D organisations. Policy-makers have asked specifically for information on the returns on investment from sweet potato research.

**Intended users / uses:** The main intended users are policy-makers at various levels, but mainly high-level, who can influence resource allocations for sweet potato. Participants in the evaluation would also benefit from on-the-job capacity development and training in impact evaluation.

**Methodological challenges:**
• Participatory research is a process of adaptive learning, and monitoring and evaluation also need to adapt continuously
• It is not clear how to evaluate the ‘value added’ aspect of the R&D partnership; as results are co-produced, it might be difficult or inappropriate to attempt to attribute impacts to specific partners
• How to go beyond evaluating results of specific interventions to evaluate the results of a sequence or combination of interventions implemented over time in one locale?
• How to gauge livelihood impacts (i.e., how to apply the livelihoods framework in an impact evaluation)?
• How to design evaluations that are effective in influencing policy?

Timing: The aim is to start the evaluation in mid-2009 and complete it during the year.

Impacts of non-pesticide management practices in Andhra Pradesh, India

Background: The increasing complexity of agricultural research for development has stimulated new thinking on how poverty reduction can build soil fertility. The recent spread of knowledge-intensive agricultural systems in India has shown how modern science can benefit from and contribute to farmer knowledge through a change in the interaction between researchers, farmers and other people involved in the system. Better management based on knowledge of agroecology, combined with new institutional arrangements, can bring about significant changes in productivity and soil fertility. This has occurred most spectacularly in the spread of non-pesticide management (NPM) and rice intensification. The NPM approach is being diffused by the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA) with other partner organisations. Knowledge of these new systems is somewhat anecdotal, and it is felt that a more thorough evaluation could help validate local experiences and throw light on principles for shifting from an input-centred agricultural development paradigm to a knowledge-intensive one.

Focus: This evaluation would document the NPM work in Andhra Pradesh over the past decade, paying particular attention to (a) the factors that enabled fast learning from field experiments and scaling up of potential new practices (e.g., policy support and others), (b) the impact and benefits resulting from this work and (c) factors that have affected, and could in future affect, the sustainability of the new practices and their benefits.

Intended users/uses: The main intended users include:
• Policy-makers and planners in the Department of Agriculture and the Planning Commission
• Donor organisations that have supported the work and could provide additional support in future
• NGOs and CBOs that have been involved in the work, to give them a more systematic knowledge of the results to date and information on which to base future strategies

Methodological challenges:
• Lack of the evaluation knowledge, skills, time and resources within participating agencies needed to carry out systematic evaluation studies
• Lack of insight about knowledge-intensive agriculture among social scientists and evaluators who could carry out the evaluation
• Commitment on the part of key implementing agencies to do such an evaluation

**Timing:** There is some flexibility about the timing, but the preference would be to do it during 2010.

**Impacts of participatory plant breeding in Bolivia**

*Background:* This evaluation was proposed by the Andean Change (Cambio Andino) initiative and the Fundación Promoción e Investigación de Productos Andinos (PROINPA) in Bolivia. Cambio Andino aims at improving the alignment of market-led agricultural innovation with poverty reduction through the use of participatory methodologies. PROINPA promotes pro-poor rural innovation in the country through applied agricultural R&D. There has been extensive participatory plant breeding (PPB) work with potatoes in Bolivia over many years.

*Focus:* The proposed evaluation would assess the extent of adoption and use of varieties resulting from PPB work in the 1990s, document the processes through which these varieties were developed and diffused, and identify the main technical and institutional factors that influenced the results of PPB efforts. The study would provide lessons for improving the use of PPB in future agricultural R&D programs in the Andes.

*Intended uses / uses:* PROINPA wishes to use the results to demonstrate the effectiveness of PPB in contributing to its mandate. Cambio Andino hopes to use the evaluation to (a) improve its impact evaluation methods and (b) generate information on the benefits of PPB that can be used to influence policy decisions and promote the use of PPB in the Andes.

*Methodological challenges:*

- Identifying appropriate measures and methods that are sufficiently accurate and feasible in the context of the programme and its timeline
- Define the thematic, temporal and geographic scope of the evaluation
- How to adequately combine quantitative and qualitative methods and triangulate the results

**Timing:** The aim is to complete the evaluation by mid-2010

**Global impacts of capacity building and partnering for bamboo and rattan development**

*Background:* INBAR is an intergovernmental organisation that promotes bamboo and rattan conservation, livelihood and economic development, environmental sustainability and trade development. It facilitates the interaction among local partners for bamboo and rattan development. Its board of trustees recently asked for an evaluation of its strategies for capacity building and partnering work.

*Focus:* This evaluation would have two main strands: (a) a general assessment of the partnering and institutional capacity building work that INBAR has done throughout the world; and (b) an evaluation of its partnering and capacity building work in selected, representative organisations in Africa, Asia and Latin America

*Intended users / uses:* There are three main groups of users:

- INBAR’s board and senior managers, to show all partners and the general public the impact to date and to guide improvements in future relationships with partners
- INBAR’s member country governments, to show what has been achieved and to discuss future collaboration
• Current and future partners, to review past and potential achievements and the development of improved partnerships

Methodological challenges:

• INBAR lacks the staff with the knowledge, skills and experience needed to conduct an evaluation

• A framework needs to be developed for this type of global evaluation

• Staff time and funds for evaluation are scarce, particularly in relation to the proposed scope of the evaluation

• Baseline data on many variables are lacking

Timing: The evaluation should be completed during 2009.
Annex 3: Scoping study co-ordinating team

Jamie Watts  *ILAC Co-ordinator*

Jamie Watts has managed the ILAC Initiative from 2003 to 2006 as a part of her duties as the Head of Evaluation at Bioversity International. Since 2007, she has been the full-time ILAC Initiative Co-ordinator. Her experience includes managing reviews and evaluations, and project and institutional level planning processes, with a focus on participatory and learning-oriented planning and evaluation to institutionalise an ‘impact culture’. Previously, Jamie managed programmes in natural resources management and tropical forest conservation at USDA, with a focus on coordinating collaborative processes, and has consulted in evaluation and planning with FAO and other organisations. She received an MA in Political Science from St Johns University in Rome, Italy where she carried out thesis research on participatory decision-making in agricultural research networks. She has a BSc in Grassland Ecology from Colorado State University, USA.

Patricia Rogers  *Professor of Public Sector Evaluation, RMIT University*

Patricia Rogers is Professor in Public Sector Evaluation and leader of a research programme on evidence-based policy and practice at CIRCLE (Collaboration for Interdisciplinary Research, Consulting and Learning in Evaluation) at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia. She has worked in public sector evaluation and research for more than 20 years, across a wide range of programmes (including health, early childhood, education, community development, indigenous housing, criminal justice, international development, and agriculture) and at various levels of government (national, state and local).

Sheelagh O’Reilly  *Director, International Organisation Development*

Sheelagh O’Reilly has a broad background in natural resources management, research and field project implementation linked to policy development. Her experience in these varied institutional environments has given her a broad view of the conditions necessary for developing inclusive approaches to the natural resources management, including agricultural research, forestry and the non-renewable sectors. Sheelagh has direct practical experience in natural resources governance and capacity building in Asia and Africa, including work with multilateral and bilateral funding agencies and the international NGO sector. From the University of Wales she has an MSc in Rural Resources Management and a PhD, and she has an LLM in Human Rights Law from the University of Strathclyde.

Douglas Horton  *ILAC Honorary Fellow and Evaluation Consultant*

Douglas Horton is engaged in research, training and advisory work on management issues, with the emphasis on monitoring and evaluation. He was a founding member of ILAC, serving as the first co-ordinator while employed as a senior researcher with ISNAR. During his time at ISNAR he co-ordinated a major project on evaluating capacity development in research and development organisations, and continues to consult on those issues. His current interests include action-research and learning, evaluation of complex programmes and capacity development efforts, and using evaluation to enhance organisational performance. Doug received BS and MS degrees in Agricultural Economics from the University of Illinois, USA and a PhD in Economics from Cornell University, USA.

Supporting the team

**Cristina Sette**, who leads ILAC’s communications, publications and marketing efforts

**Bronwen McDonald**, an evaluation expert who worked with Patricia Rogers at RMIT
Annex 4: About ILAC

Hosted by Bioversity International, ILAC was established in 2003 to strengthen the capacity of collaborative programmes to promote pro-poor agricultural innovation and to ensure that research and development activities are managed more effectively to contribute to poverty reduction. The specific focus of ILAC is on collaborative arrangements that target and actively engage poor farmers and other poor people.

The ILAC Initiative brings together a group of national and international partners who are committed to pursuing these objectives and to increasing the contribution of the CGIAR to poverty alleviation by improving planning, monitoring and evaluation of collaborative agricultural research for development. ILAC contributes specifically by:

- identifying, supporting and drawing lessons from collaborative pro-poor agricultural innovation programmes
- building the capacity of these programmes
- providing technical support to scientists and managers
- mobilising funds and resources
- facilitating knowledge sharing among rural innovation professionals
- influencing research and development policies to promote institutional learning and change

ILAC’s activities are categorised into four main areas:

1. Applied Research and Evaluation
2. Capacity Development
3. Fostering Leadership for Pro-poor Innovation
4. Communications and Knowledge Sharing

The proposed project on ‘Impact Evaluation Approaches for Collaborative Agricultural Research and Development’ falls under Applied Research and Evaluation.

The collaborative programmes and partners working with ILAC include:

- African Highlands Initiative (AHI), ICRAF
- Andean Change Program and Impact Enhancement Division, CIP
- Bioversity International
- CGIAR Central Advisory Service on Intellectual Property
- CGIAR Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis (PRGA)
- Community At Work, USA
- Impacts Targeting Unit, CIMMYT
- Innovation Works Initiative, ILRI
- Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex
- Mainstreaming Impact Group, CIAT
- Research Into Use (RIU), DFID
- Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)
- Users’ Perspectives With Agricultural Research and Development (UPWARD), CIP
- Xavier Institute of Management, India

ILAC also works in collaboration with a team of experts from different disciplines (e.g., participatory research, impact evaluation and organisational learning. The team of includes: Robert Chambers, IDS, UK; Douglas Horton, ILAC Honorary Fellow; Ronald Mackay, ILAC Honorary Fellow; and Patricia Rogers, RMIT, Australia.

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Annex 5: Documents referenced

The documents consulted during the scoping study and the compilation of this report are listed here. This list is followed by a bibliography of references cited within the report.


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ILAC, PRGA, ILRI. 2008. Rethinking Impact Workshop key issues. *Rethinking Impact Workshop Brief No. 1*. ILAC, Rome, Italy; PRGA, Cali, Colombia; ILRI, Nairobi, Kenya


# Acronyms and abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>3ie</td>
<td>International Initiative for Impact Evaluation</td>
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<td>ACIAR</td>
<td>Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research</td>
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<td>AfrEA</td>
<td>African Evaluation Association</td>
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<td>AGM</td>
<td>annual general meeting</td>
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<td>AHI</td>
<td>African Highlands Initiative</td>
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<td>AIS</td>
<td>Agricultural Innovation System</td>
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<td>ASARECA</td>
<td>Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa</td>
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<td>AWARD</td>
<td>African Women in Agricultural Research and Development</td>
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<td>CBO</td>
<td>community-based organisation</td>
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<td>CGIAR</td>
<td>Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research</td>
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<td>CPWF</td>
<td>Challenge Program for Water and Food</td>
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<td>CIAT</td>
<td>Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical</td>
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<td>CIFOR</td>
<td>Centre for International Forestry Research</td>
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<td>CIMMYT</td>
<td>International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center</td>
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<td>CIP</td>
<td>International Potato Center</td>
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<td>CIRCLE</td>
<td>Collaboration for Interdisciplinary Research, Consulting and Learning in Evaluation</td>
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<td>CSA</td>
<td>Centre for Sustainable Agriculture</td>
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<td>DAC</td>
<td>Development Assistance Committee (OECD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development (UK)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DGIS-NL</td>
<td>Directoraat-Generaal Internationale Samenwerking (Netherlands)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DURAS</td>
<td>Développement durable dans les systèmes de recherche agricole du sud</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMBRAPA</td>
<td>Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation</td>
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<td>EPTD</td>
<td>Energy Planning and Technological Development</td>
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<td>ERR</td>
<td>economic rate-of-return</td>
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<td>FARA</td>
<td>Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa</td>
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<td>FCND</td>
<td>Food Consumption and Nutrition Division (IFPRI)</td>
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<td>FONTAGRO</td>
<td>Fondo Regional de Tecnología Agropecuaria</td>
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<tr>
<td>GFAR</td>
<td>Global Fund for Agricultural Research</td>
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<td>IAASTD</td>
<td>International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development</td>
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<td>IAEG</td>
<td>Impact Assessment and Evaluation Group</td>
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<td>IAFP</td>
<td>Impact Assessment Focal Point Group (CGIAR)</td>
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<td>ICARDA</td>
<td>International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas</td>
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<td>ICIPE</td>
<td>International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology</td>
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<td>ICRAF</td>
<td>World Agroforestry Center</td>
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<td>ICRI SAT</td>
<td>International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>information and communication technology</td>
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<td>IDRC</td>
<td>International Development Research Center</td>
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<td>IDS</td>
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<td>International Fund for Agricultural Development</td>
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<td>International Food and Policy Research Institute</td>
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<td>IITA</td>
<td>International Institute of Tropical Agriculture</td>
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<td>ILAC</td>
<td>Institutional Learning and Change Initiative</td>
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<td>ILRI</td>
<td>International Livestock Research Institute</td>
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INBAR  International Network for Bamboo and Rattan
INRM  integrated natural resource management
IRD  Institute de la Recherche pour la Développement
IRRI  International Rice Research Institute
ISNAR  International Service for National Agricultural Research
IWMI  International Water Management Institute
JIRCAS  Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences
KARI  Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI)
KFPF  Kommission fuer Forschungspartnerschaften mit Entwicklungsländern
KM  knowledge management
MUSALAC  Plantain and Banana Research and Development Network for Latin America and the Caribbean
NGO  non-governmental organisation
NONIE  Network of Networks on Impact Evaluation
NORAD  Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation
NORAGRIC  Department of International Environment and Development Studies, Norwegian University of Life Sciences
NPM  non-pesticide management
NRM  natural resources management
OECD  Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPB  participatory plant breeding
PREVAL  Programme for Strengthening the Regional Capacity for Monitoring and Evaluation of Rural Poverty-Alleviation Projects in Latin America and the Caribbean
PRGA  Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis (CGIAR)
PROINPA  Fundación Promoción e Investigación de Productos Andinos
R&D  research and development
RIU  Research into Use (DFID)
RIW  Rethinking Impact Workshop
RMIT  Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
SAA  Sasakawa Africa Association
SDC  Swiss Development Corporation
SGRP  System-wide Genetic Resources Programme
SPIA  Standing Panel for Impact Assessment (CGIAR)
SPME  Standing Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation
SSA  Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Program
TCA  Tarlac College of Agriculture
UPWARD  Users’ Perspectives with Agricultural Research and Development
USDA  United States Department of Agriculture