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**Report of the NGO Committee to the CGIAR
International Centers Week, 1998
Washington, D.C.**

The CGIAR NGO Committee (NGOC) held its seventh meeting at the World Bank headquarters on October 24-25, 1998. Attached is the report presented by the committee to the CGIAR at ICW98.

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Genetic Resources Policy Committee
NGO Committee
Private Sector Committee
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**Report of the NGO Committee to the CGIAR
International Centers Week, 1998
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The CGIAR NGO Committee (NGOC) held its seventh meeting at the World Bank Headquarters in Washington, D.C. in conjunction with the International Centers Week. Participants in the meeting were Miguel Altieri (Chair), Christian Castellanet, Bernd Dreesmann, Yuexin Du, Julian Gonsalves, Assetou Kanoute, Jeffrey McNeely, Carmen Felipe Morales, Dwi Muhtaman, Didier Pillot, Ranil Senanayake, and Jean Marc von der Weid. A representative of PAN-Africa, Abou Thiam, also attended the meeting as an observer.

Activities

During the period between MTM 98 to ICW 98, the CGIAR-NGOC was involved in a number of important activities.

1. From July 27 to 28, 1998, the NGOC Chair visited IPGRI in Rome in order to further understand IPGRI's research on in-situ conservation of genetic resources and policy issues related to IPR and biotechnology. After discussions with most of IPGRI's staff, the NGOC Chair made the following conclusions and recommendations:
 - IPGRI acts primarily as a catalyst which facilitates research, provides guidelines, methodologies and technical assistance for networks that do most of the hands-on work. This operational mode may prove useful for most CGIAR centers to follow.
 - IPGRI's dialogue with NGOs, particularly those that have taken a firm stand in relation to farmers' rights, IPR and in-situ conservation is very commendable and could be further increased and institutionalized. Interactions with NGOs that are promoting seed fairs and community seed banks are critical to ensure that in-situ conservation result in actions that really benefit poor farmers.
 - IPGRI's efforts at balancing ex-situ and in-situ approaches, and its broader strategy of gene management guided by farmers deserve the support of NGOs.
 - Attention should be paid to what constitutes "uses" of genetic resources to ensure that this is not defined solely by market forces but rather by the cultural and ecological factors that actually govern use by traditional farmers.
 - IPGRI's portfolio could be broadened to include research on key ecological services which are provided by agro-biodiversity such as biological control and nutrient cycling.
 - It should be made clear whether IPGRI's positions on IPR, biotechnology and biodiversity represent the views of the CGIAR. There are many issues

such as biopiracy, and farmers' rights, access, and compensation, for which IPGRI in collaboration with certain NGOs can help the CGIAR define positions and policies that clearly represent the needs of poor farmers.

- Training activities of IPGRI should include more NGOs as both participants and trainers.
 - IPGRI can have a major role in increasing public awareness on issues related to biodiversity.
2. On August 24-25, 1998, Don Winkelman, TAC Chair, Larry Harrington, Director, Natural Resources Group, CIMMYT, and M.A. Altieri, NGOC Chair, visited Patzcuaro, Mexico to interact with three NGOs (CESE, GIRA, and SAED) and to assess the collaborative research being undertaken between these NGOs and CIMMYT on natural resource management and on-farm genetic conservation. This was part of an agreed effort between CGIAR-NGOC and TAC to identify cases which exemplify the opportunities for fostering stronger links between IARCs and NGOs. This visit is the second TAC-NGOC joint visit prompted by evidence that many NGO projects have successfully contributed to poverty alleviation and/or natural resource conservation at the community level. Lucia de Vaccaro (TAC) and Miguel Altieri (NGOC) visited several NGO projects in Colombia in May 1998, with the assistance of CIAT. What emerged was a sense that NGO/TAC could contribute to criteria for selecting such projects and that center/NGOs could collaborate in framing methods and processes for implementing scaling-up of projects that potentially impact a significant number of farmers. The Colombia visit turned up several criteria, with "demonstrated impact" of the project as a principal element for selection.

The agenda featured an opening briefing, a visit to on-farm research where four farmers gathered to talk about their experiences, a visit to the station of SAED where trials with legumes, flowers and composting techniques were underway, a discussion session with 15 farmers, a visit to an INIFAT plot which focused on soil conservation practices, and a closing session with one NGO leader on future courses of action.

SAED engaged in the collection of local varieties and in organizing seed fairs where farmers exchange material and knowledge about features of local varieties.

The work of GIRA involved re-introducing crop diversity (bean varieties) and also green manures for soil fertility enhancement in corn systems. At the meeting, farmers clearly stated that fertilizers were too expensive but this did not necessarily mean that if they had more cash they would buy fertilizers. It meant that they wanted cheaper options like green manures and compost. Many farmers also said that chemical fertilizers produced more zacate, acidified the soil and caused more diseases. Obviously, such observations justify the relevance of the NGOs' work on alternative sources of fertilization, which could be strengthened by a more focused and substantial assistance

from CIMMYT. More focused partnerships would bring NGOs into closer orbit with centers, systematically identifying farm level needs for elements of technologies such as varieties, framing efficient research procedures, and shaping technologies for farmers.

Although the NGOs agree that IARCs' role is to produce international public goods, the problem with the strategy has been to assume that one general technology (usually germplasm) will fit all the heterogeneous social and environmental circumstances of the thousands of farmers. Sustainable agriculture proposals become crystallized at the local level, hence testing sites are of key importance. This is where NGOs become critical partners. The Mexican NGOs that were visited can transform the whole Patzcuaro watershed into a benchmark site, given the right collaborative arrangements with CIMMYT and perhaps with INIFAT.

3. From October 5 to 9, 1998, the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) in the Philippines organized a workshop on "Research Partnerships between NGOs and Agricultural Research Institutions" which was co-sponsored by the NGOC. The main objective of the workshop was to derive lessons and recommendations to improve future NGO-Research partnerships.

From the presentations of twelve case studies from Africa, Latin America and Asia, the 37 workshop participants concluded that:

- The strengths of NGOs are in facilitating technology development at the field level and at linking together farmers and scientists. Their weaknesses include their inadequate formal research capacity and their tendency to focus on their own limited groups of beneficiaries.
- Through these types of partnership, NGOs gain facilitated access to funding and enhanced technological capacity.
- Research institutions gain enhanced capability in working with farmers, using participatory methods, becoming more familiar with local conditions, obtaining feedback on results, and acquiring a platform for disseminating results.
- These partnerships result in a more efficient use of resources and synergies, a stronger consideration of farmer constraints, and an increased relevance, adequacy and use of research.
- Successful partnerships depend on building personal relationships and trust, identifying common goals, respective roles and responsibilities, and strengths and weaknesses of each partner.
- The potential constraints to meaningful partnerships include differing mandates and research orientation, undefined roles, responsibilities and expectations, supply-driven vs. demand-driven projects, and lack of enabling policies.

The workshop participants also presented specific recommendations on the following themes:

- Knowledge-base enrichment and methodological dimensions of partnerships.
 - Institutional issues in partnerships.
 - Cost, consequences and benefits of partnerships.
4. From October 22 to 23, 1998, in Washington DC, the NGOC conducted a consultation on Natural Resources Management (NRM) involving 45 participants from NGOs, TAC, IARCs, Universities and NARIs. The objective of the consultation was to assist the CGIAR in defining an NRM strategy congruent with its mission of poverty alleviation, food security and preservation of the natural resource base of poor farmers located in marginal/fragile areas. The main conclusions of the NRM consultation included:
- The knowledge base of a pro-poor NRM strategy should be grounded in the science of ecology and on traditional sources of knowledge. The fundamental ecological principles guiding a pro-poor NRM strategy include biodiversity, resource flows, productivity and ecosystem resilience and their application translate into specific management and technological options that optimize the ecological function of agricultural and forestry systems.
 - Methodological mechanisms must be in place so that NRM options actually reach poor farmers. Such methodological mechanisms include:
 - effective institutional partnerships
 - participatory research and development methods
 - empowerment of local communities
 - scaling-up of successful local NRM initiatives
 - development of indicators of sustainable NRM
 - Effective social organization, empowerment of communities, access to land, and enabling policies are crucial for an NRM strategy to effectively improve the livelihoods of poor farming communities.

NGOC Comments on the CGIAR System Review Report

During ICW 98, the NGOC expressed its views on the 24 recommendations of the SR panel at the three working groups' (Science, Partnership, and Governance) sessions.

- In general, the NGOC feels that the report does not constitute a radical departure from the current structure of the CGIAR, although it proposes a new governance system including the creation of a central board. The recommendation of eliminating the NGOC is based on the

perception by the panel that the NGOC has been ineffective in creating IARC-NGO partnerships and in offering alternatives. Unfortunately, the External Review Panel is unaware of the history behind the creation of the NGOC under the renewal process and the considerable efforts of the NGOC to first get to know the CGIAR and its centers and then to open a dialogue on at times very controversial issues such as biotechnology and IPR. In fact, the NGOC has constantly sought to promote partnerships with centers along activities of training (ICRAF, IITA), workshops (IIMI, IRRI, CIP, ICRAF) and field projects (CIAT, CIMMYT, ICRAF). The NGOC has also pointed out to the CGIAR the many advances that NGOs have achieved in the areas of agroecology and natural resources management as real alternatives to Green Revolution technologies that have not worked in low-potential, marginal areas, where most of the poor farmers live.

- Although the report provides a new mission statement for the CGIAR, it does not offer a working definition of key words such as sustainable agricultural development, food security, and poor farmers. This creates ambiguity by leaving the mission statement open to reinterpretation. The NGOC has insisted on adopting a working definition of sustainable agriculture that includes social equity and agroecological technologies, and a definition of food security that includes access and distribution of food in addition to production.
- The role of biotechnology is again highlighted as the key endeavor of the centers, and alliances with the private sector, including seeking funding from private donors is recommended. Little is discussed about the legal, ethical and equity implications of such activities. At the Science Working Group discussions, members of the NGOC recommended that the CGIAR adopt an integrated natural resources management approach of which genetic resources are an important part and biotechnology be regarded as an additional option among many, to address NRM issues. The NGOC has also made it clear that there are serious biosafety considerations in the release of transgenic crops and these must be addressed by the CGIAR before engaging in field releases. The NGOC also supports the statement recommended by the Genetic Resources Policy Committee that the CGIAR centers "will not incorporate into their breeding material any genetic system designed to prevent seed germination", otherwise known as the "terminator technology."
- Natural Resource Management (NRM) is also recommended as a research area to be emphasized by the IARCs, including a call for more on-farm local level work by CG scientists. No NRM scientific or methodological framework is offered on how to accomplish this work other than simply stating that NRM research is site specific and needs to focus on the poor. The external review lists several NRM issues that the CGIAR must face, but most are of a physico-chemical nature, relate mostly to land and water degradation, and totally ignore the

biological and ecological dimensions of NRM. In addition, traditional knowledge and agroecology are mentioned but with no further development of the concepts or their implications. It is critical that the CGIAR create mechanisms to truly incorporate farmers' traditional knowledge as an important source of wisdom on how to sustainably manage natural resources and agrobiodiversity.

- On the issue of partnerships, the NGOC strongly believes that NGOs will increasingly emerge as key partners of IARCs given the fact that the private sector is not engaged in developing technologies appropriate to poor farmers and that many national agricultural research institutions (NARIs), under great pressure to become financially self-sufficient, are either focusing on the export sector or have been weakened to the point of becoming non-operational. Many NGOs have substantial expertise in NRM and enjoy significant access to local communities.
- The focus on Africa is important but should not mean foregoing opportunities in LDCs in the rest of the world. Training of young African scientists is to be conducted on a massive scale through the creation of an African Capacity Building Center fueled by the knowledge and expertise of IARCs, ARIs and advanced NARS in Brazil, China and India. Curiously, some areas that the report recommends to focus training on, such as urban agriculture and production of biofertilizers, could be best served by establishing direct links with Cuba or other countries in Latin America or Asia, but this possibility of South-South exchange is not even considered. No analysis is offered about the potential contribution of local universities and existing NGO networks located in the South (SANE, CLADES, PAN, ANGOC, IIRR, RAFI, etc.) to assist Africa in capacity building.
- The NGOC feels that the System Review could have proposed some creative forms of centers reorganization and/or consolidation. Innovation in governance and structure is key to the CGIAR positioning itself in the 21st century and there are still opportunities to embark on pilot experiments for new center configurations so that such centers more adequately implement the new CGIAR mission.

One suggestion is that the centers located in each region (Latin America, Asia and Africa) concentrate efforts on issues exclusively relevant to their regions. IFPRI, IPGRI and ISNAR should either have very small headquarter offices or dismantle the headquarters and establish operations in each of the regional centers supporting the work of scientists in the areas of policy, genetic resources, biotechnology and institutional relations with NARS, etc. As a specific example, a center "X" could assume only a regional mandate, and its programs in other regions would be absorbed by IARCs in those regions. Similarly, other IARC's programs operating in center X would become part of center X, thus supporting each center on policy, genetic resources, and other areas. Center X would be equipped by a key group of international scientists but most of its scientific and

technical staff would be composed of regional and local people. Key partnerships would be established with local, national and regional NGOs, universities, NARIs and farmer organizations. Heavy involvement by center X in local and regional field activities would be possible through the numerous regional technical staff positioned in key areas in partnerships with local institutions.

The NGOC will continue to collaborate and contribute through the CGIAR Consultative Council to help ensure that the revised recommendations of the System Review become a reality and that the CGIAR achieve its new mission of contributing to food security and poverty eradication in developing countries through the promotion of sustainable agricultural development based on the environmentally sound management of natural resources.

NGOC Membership

At the end of ICW98, four members of the Committee completed their three-year term. They were Ranil Senanayake, Didier Pillot, Jeanout Minia Mfou'ou, and Jeffrey McNeely. Kamla Chowdhry, who was scheduled to also complete her term at ICW98, resigned in September, 1998. A search for new members was launched immediately after MTM98. Upon recommendation by the Committee, three candidates were invited by the CGIAR Chairman to join the Committee as new members. These were Christian Castellanet (Groupe de Recherche et d'Echanges Technologiques (GRET), France), Dwi Muhtaman (Lembaga Alam Tropika Indonesia (LATIN), Indonesia), and Jean Marc von der Weid (Assessoria e Serviços a Projetos em Agricultura Alternativa (ASPTA), Brazil). Recruitment to fill the other vacant slots was held in abeyance until after the CGIAR has decided on the recommendations of the System Review concerning the partnership committees.

The NGOC Chair thanked the departing members for their valuable contributions to the work of the Committee and welcomed the new members.

A list of current NGOC members is attached.

Drafted by:

Miguel Altieri
Chair, NGOC

CGIAR NGO COMMITTEE
As of January 22, 1999

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