



Fund

## **Fund Council**

**1<sup>st</sup> Meeting (FC1)—Brussels, Belgium**

**February 22-23, 2010**

**Principles and Options for an Independent  
Evaluation Arrangement for the CGIAR Fund**

(Working Document - For Discussion Only)

*Document presented for Agenda Item 7:  
Independent Evaluation Arrangement*

Submitted by:  
Fund Office

# **Principles and Options for an Independent Evaluation Arrangement for the CGIAR Fund<sup>1</sup> Summary**

## **1. Outcome expected**

Decision on the establishment of a CGIAR Independent Evaluation Unit hosted by FAO

## **2. Background**

As approved by the CGIAR Business Meeting, an independent evaluation arrangement will be established. This note proposes a set of guiding principles and options for an independent evaluation arrangement for the CGIAR Fund. It is informed by workshop discussions involving external evaluation experts, Alliance, Interim Independent Science and Partnership Council (iISPC), CGIAR donors and the Fund Office.

## **3. Proposal**

The following is being proposed

- I. Building blocks for the independent evaluation arrangement:
  - A. Guiding principles and norms for the new CGIAR independent evaluation arrangement
  - B. Core functions of the independent evaluation arrangement
  - C. General approach to evaluation of research for development
- II. Two optional leadership models for the independent evaluation unit
- III. Location of for the independent evaluation unit: FAO, Rome

## **4. Recommendations**

The recommendation is for the Fund Council to approve

- the proposal of establishing a CGIAR Independent Evaluation Unit with the principles and functions described.

With regards to the location we recommend that

- the unit be hosted by FAO under a stand-alone host agreement with the Fund.

With regards to the Leadership we recommend that the candidate would

- have demonstrated an ability to be a strong advocate for evaluation and has a track record in both science and evaluation
- be Head of the Evaluation Unit / Chief Evaluator (100%), or serve as a part-time Chair of Evaluation (25%) with a chief evaluator managing the unit's day-to-day work.

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<sup>1</sup> This document has been prepared by the CGIAR Fund Office for consideration by the Fund Council at its 1<sup>st</sup> meeting in Brussels on February 22/23, 2010.

# Principles and Options for an Independent Evaluation Arrangement for the CGIAR Fund<sup>2</sup>

## I. Background

At the 2009 CGIAR Business Meeting a new Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework for the new CGIAR was endorsed. It will support the successful implementation of the Strategy and Results Framework and help translate the CGIAR vision into tangible results. It reflects a new accountability framework in which the Consortium Board is responsible for external evaluation of each Center, Mega Program components and cross cutting issues, and Consortium Office including shared services, while the Fund Council is responsible for evaluating Mega Programs and cross cutting issues through an independent evaluation arrangement.

The overall M&E framework incorporates a number of decisions on the specific aspects of monitoring and evaluation. As approved by the CGIAR Business Meeting, an independent evaluation arrangement will be established; its design will be finalized in 2010 and it will become operational in 2010/11 or as required. Its design and governance should be in accordance with international best practice and follow standards of “independence” as defined by the OECD/DAC Network of Development Evaluation, based on guidance provided by the Fund Council in consultation with the Consortium Board.

Two possible administrative arrangements for the new evaluation function have been suggested during discussions at the ExCo 17 meeting (November 2009): (i) a CGIAR evaluation team hosted by an international organization with a strong evaluation function (e.g. IFAD), (ii) co-locating the secretarial support to the new CGIAR evaluation function with the ISPC Secretariat at FAO. Furthermore the interim ISPC emphasized in a paper some important features of evaluation science and of research for development.

A workshop hosted by the CGIAR Fund Office on January 20, 2010 in Washington DC brought together representatives of CGIAR funders, the Consortium, and evaluation experts from both the development and research sectors to jointly explore key principles, considerations and options for an independent evaluation arrangement for the new CGIAR.

**This note proposes a set of guiding principles and options for an independent evaluation arrangement for the CGIAR Fund.** It is informed by workshop discussions involving external evaluation experts including a science evaluation expert, GEF Evaluation Office (Global Environment Fund) and IEG (Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank), Alliance, Interim Independent Science and Partnership Council (iISPC), CGIAR donors and the Fund Office. The summary notes of this workshop can be found at [http://www.cgiar.org/pdf/cgiar\\_iea\\_options\\_workshop\\_summary\\_jan2010.pdf](http://www.cgiar.org/pdf/cgiar_iea_options_workshop_summary_jan2010.pdf).

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<sup>2</sup> This document has been prepared by the CGIAR Fund Office for consideration by the Fund Council at its 1<sup>st</sup> meeting in Brussels on February 22/23, 2010.

## II. Building Blocks for an Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA)

The following building blocks are proposed for the independent evaluation arrangement:

- D. Guiding principles and norms for the new CGIAR independent evaluation arrangement
- E. Core functions of the independent evaluation arrangement
- F. General approach to evaluation of research for development

### A. Guiding principles and norms for the new CGIAR independent evaluation arrangement

The basis for designing a new evaluation function is to establish a set of core principles and norms to serve as guiding criteria for forming and operationalizing the evaluation function.

The proposed guiding principles are:

- ***Independence***

The evaluation process should be independent from program policy making, management, and activity implementation. Such independence helps ensure that evaluation findings are impartial and credible.<sup>3</sup>

*“ An independent evaluation is carried out by entities and persons free of the control of those responsible for the design and implementation of the development intervention....Independence implies freedom from political influence and organizational pressure. It is characterized by full access to information and by full autonomy in carrying out investigations and reporting findings. “ (OECD 2002)*

In the CGIAR context, this would mean that evaluators do not have a personal or institutional interest, nor a previous involvement, in the activities they are evaluating and that the evaluation entity is empowered to report on its findings without restrictions on content.

- ***Consultation***

Independence does not mean isolation. The credibility of the evaluation depends on transparency and stakeholder consultation during design, implementation and reporting. Evaluations should be designed after consultation with the major stakeholders in a program,

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<sup>3</sup> Independence in the CGIAR context has two broad dimensions: structural and behavioural. **Structural independence** refers to the setting of the evaluation function within the organization. In the CGIAR context, this would mean that the evaluation function does not report to, and is not directed by, the entities whose work it is evaluating, namely the Centers, the Consortium and the ISPC. **Behavioural independence** relates to the evaluators' impartiality in conducting evaluation work and their "willingness and ability to issue uncompromising reports". (Imas and Rist, 2009, p.33) It entails the absence of conflicts of interest; the ability to retain independence of judgment, and immunity to pressure from any party to modify evaluation findings.

including: those whose work is being evaluated, beneficiaries of the work, outside experts, and the audience for the evaluation. Such consultations can alert evaluators to the full range of issues, claims and hypotheses that the evaluation may wish to test.

- ***Competence and quality assurance***

The credibility of evaluation also depends on the expertise of the evaluators and the quality of the evaluations. This entails that

- Teams engaged in designing, conducting and managing evaluation activities should possess both (i) core evaluation competencies and qualifications (e.g. understanding of results-based management principles, logical framework analysis, utilization-focused, summative and formative evaluation, quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis) and (ii) specific technical knowledge of the subject matter under evaluation
- managers of the evaluation function ensure that the evaluation function is fully operational and that evaluation work is conducted according to the highest professional standards.
- Systematic quality assurance of the evaluations' design, methodology, the conduct and reporting.

- ***Learning and Knowledge Building***

The evaluation function is expected to contribute to decision-making and learning, as well as to accountability. This learning objective requires dedicated effort to capture and disseminate evaluation findings, and therefore clarity about the primary audiences for the evaluation

## **B. Core Functions of the Independent Evaluation Arrangement**

Building on the M&E framework the proposed independent evaluation arrangement would have the following core functions:

- **Develop a CGIAR Evaluation Policy and Standards** in consultation with the Fund donors, the Consortium and other stakeholders
- **Manage the independent evaluations of Mega Programs** and/or cross-cutting themes focusing on the extent to which MP outputs and outcomes are likely to achieve, or have achieved, stated objectives, and which may inter alia validate findings of Consortium-commissioned evaluations, and
- **Manage the independent evaluation of the CGIAR Partnership** as a whole to be commissioned periodically by a Joint Fund Council/Consortium Reference Group.
- **Validate those Consortium Board-commissioned evaluation products and other potential self-evaluations that can be used as input for the independent**

- evaluation of MPs and cross-cutting issues.** This involves (i) screening/assessment of Consortium-commissioned evaluation for their quality, (ii) synthesizing the findings, (iii) confirming that recommendations of the Consortium-commissioned evaluation are evidence based, and finally (iv) verification of findings on a sample basis in the field.
- **Effectively communicate evaluations findings to stakeholders to promote learning and knowledge building**
  - **Manage roster of technical experts and evaluators**

### **C. General approach to evaluation of CGIAR research for development**

IEA will aim at a combination of research evaluation approaches and objective-based evaluation. Objective-based evaluation is a common practice in program evaluation for the purpose of accountability. It is typically used to assess the achievements of objectives as defined in a results framework. Research evaluation is typically peer-review based and uses special data and output measures (e.g. publications, citations). It can be both formative and summative in nature with focus on evaluation of “quality and excellence” of the research conducted.

Given that the CGIAR’s mission is to conduct research for development while embracing results-based management more fully there is merit in a hybrid approach to evaluating CGIAR research activities and achievements, by linking principles and good practices from both research and development evaluations.

## **III. Leadership**

The Leadership of the IEA is critical for developing this new function. The head of the IAE should serve as a strong advocate for sound evaluation in the CGIAR. S/he will shape the future of the CGIAR IEA, which is likely to evolve over time in terms of its direction, the approach, and the management set up. The person should have a scientific background with strong evaluation credentials.

The leadership of the IEA would be recruited by the Fund Council and report directly to the Fund Council. The person would ensure that the evaluation function is fully operational and that evaluation work is conducted according to the highest professional standards. The leadership would be responsible for systematic quality assurance of the evaluations’ design, methodology, the conduct and reporting.

Two possible Leadership Models are being proposed

- a. Head of the unit is **an Evaluation Chair (~25% of his/her time)**, who would be a strong advocate for evaluation and has a track record in both science and evaluation. **The Chair**

**would predominantly have an advocacy and representational role.** The person would be selected by the Fund Council and report to the Fund Council. The Head would be supported by a full-time Chief Evaluator and 1-2 professionals with technical expertise in social or natural sciences and strong evaluation credentials, and one administrative assistant

- b. The unit is lead by a **Head of Evaluation / Chief Evaluator (100%)**, who would be a strong advocate for evaluation and has a track record in both science and evaluation. **The full-time head would have both a representational and managerial role.** The person would be selected by the Fund Council and report to the Fund Council. He/She would be supported by 2-3 professionals with technical expertise in social or natural sciences and strong evaluation credentials, and one administrative assistant.

### **Pros and Cons of the models**

- model (a) is comparable to the ISPC leadership model; the Chair would play the role of a strong advocate and representative of the function, while having little managerial responsibility of the evaluation unit which predominantly is in a supporting role. This set-up will attract a group of candidates for the Chair that is highly qualified, at a later stage of their carrier or retired and who may wish to only devote a small fraction of their time to the assignment. The Chief Evaluator would manage the day to day work at the unit with a certain degree of empowerment.
- in model (b) the head can devote all his/her time to developing and positioning a new strong evaluation function and manage a unit in the same direction, well positioned to fulfill the function. The leader of the unit would be fully empowered and be based at the unit together with the staff which can facilitate an efficient decision-making process. This set-up will attract a group of candidates for the Chief evaluator that is highly qualified, at mid to late-career stage with leadership qualities and experience, and commitment to devote all their time to the assignment.

## **IV. Ex-post evaluation and Ex-post impact assessment**

Typically impact assessment is considered one form of ex-post evaluation, focusing on the positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by an intervention (or in our case CGIAR research), directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

In the CGIAR, impact assessment has been traditionally a function of the SC, especially with respect to promoting an impact assessment culture at Centers and with respect to providing information on research impacts at system-level. When the evaluation function was separated from the SC responsibilities, the function of impact assessment remained with the SC. It is being lead by the Chair of the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment, who is an ex-officio member of the SC.

Going forward two models are plausible

1. **Ex-post impact assessment remains part of the ISPC responsibilities**  
This model would maintain the status quo.
2. **Ex-post impact assessment becomes part of the IAE responsibilities with a distinct budget.**  
This model would facilitate the integration of ‘impact assessment’ into the independent evaluation of the entire results chain, as it is typically practiced in other organization.

## V. Location

It is proposed that the “**independent evaluation arrangement**” be housed by a partner organization, and be named as ‘Independent Evaluation Unit’.

The criteria for the selection of the location should be

- efficiency considerations
- not isolated from other components of the system and the scientific community;
- location must not compromise independence;
- minimization of opportunities for influence

After consultations with various stakeholders the proposed location for the Independent Evaluation Unit is FAO in Rome. The Unit would be hosted by FAO and would have a separate administrative agreement with the host organization ensuring that its independence is not compromised.

## VI. Recommendations

The recommendation is for the Fund Council to approve

- **the proposal of establishing a CGIAR Independent Evaluation Unit with the principles and functions described above.**

With regards to the location we recommend that

- **the unit be hosted by FAO under a stand-alone host agreement with the Fund. This agreement would be fully separate from the host agreements of Science Council Secretariat and the Alliance Office, and would entail no administrative linkages to either one entity (e.g. reporting lines, shared staff or facilities).**

With regards to the Leadership we recommend that the candidate would

- **have demonstrated an ability to be a strong advocate for evaluation and has a track record in both science and evaluation**

- **be Head of the Evaluation Unit / Chief Evaluator (100%), or serve as a part-time Chair of Evaluation (25%) with a chief evaluator managing the unit's day-to-day work.**

## **VII. Next Steps**

The following next steps are proposed:

- to develop draft Terms of Reference for the head of the new CGIAR Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) for approval by the Fund Council (by March 31, 2010)
- to negotiate host agreement with IEU hosting organization
- to begin the recruitment process for head of new IEU (April 1, 2010)
- to complete the recruitment process and the selected candidate is on board (end of 2010)

It is pivotal that the head of the IEU is recruited in 2010, in time before the Mega Programs are fully developed and launched. The person would start establishing the evaluation function, including recruitment of staff, development of work plan, and engagement with Consortium to lead the development of a CGIAR evaluation policy as to ensure alignment in standards and methods of the various evaluation products.