



Meeting Report
Consortium Board Meeting
Sunday 23 May – Tuesday 25 May, 2010
Rome, ITALY

The Board of the Consortium of the CGIAR Centers held its second meeting in Rome from 23-25 May 2010. Participants included Carlos Pérez del Castillo (Board Chair), Carl Hausmann (Vice-Chair), Mohamed Ait-Kadi, Tom Arnold, Ganesan Balachander, Gebisa Ejeta, Ian Golding and Lynn Haight (Board Members), Andrew Bennett (Observer, representing Centre Members), Rob Bertram (Observer, representing the Fund Council), Anne-Marie Izac (Chief Officer, interim Consortium Office) and Fiona Chandler (Acting Executive Secretary of the Board)¹.

The Board met for three days, with the second day being a joint meeting with the full Alliance. In those three days of meetings, the Board made a number of key decisions.

Strategy and Results Framework

The Board welcomed the SRF document presented as it reflects a collective effort of the Alliance of the Centers. The Board noted that it has not been involved in the development of this first SRF and it acknowledged that it has to discharge this responsibility in the future as outlined in the Consortium Constitution.

The Board discussed the document, noting the improvements made to the previous version. The Board accepted the document as a great step forward, whilst acknowledging some limitations in the document.

The Board decided that the Centers be asked to improve the SRF Executive Summary and to incorporate any changes in the document as a result of the Board's decisions on Mega Programs (see next section).

The improvements the Board would like to see addressed in the executive summary are:

- Inclusion of investment figures and the corresponding benefits that will be created
- Additional text that makes more explicit the role of meaningful partnerships with national programs and
- The CGIAR's role in capacity building

Mega Program concept notes

The interim Consortium Office sent each MP concept note to external reviewers, selected for their reputation, disciplinary relevance and absence of conflict of interest. The Board reviewed the reviewer's reports and a summary of these reports, and discussed the conclusions each Board Member reached on each concept note. The Board noted that the concept notes varied in quality and in the amount of further work needed for development into a full MP proposal.

The Board decided that with the exception of the concept note on "Genetic diversity for better lives", the other eleven MP concept notes should be further developed taking into account the comments that will be provided by the Board to the Centers.

The Board fully acknowledges the importance of germplasm issues in the CGIAR system and decided to commission a scoping study that examines what would be the best mechanism to address these

¹ Apologies from Bongiwe Njobe (Vice-Chair)



cross cutting issues especially in terms of advocacy and policy. The scoping study will include an analysis of the current and future roles of the Global Crop Diversity Trust and the Genetic Resources Policy Committee. The interim Consortium Office will propose terms of reference and potential consultants to the Board.

The Board agreed to a process for providing the centres with written comments and guidance for each concept note with suggestions on how they can be improved for further development as proposals. These comments will represent the Board's collective views. The Consortium Board Chair will circulate these to the lead authors of the MP concept notes by 17 June 2010. The reports from the external reviewers will be sent only to the lead authors of each concept note.

A process for MP proposal development will be developed by the interim Consortium Office and circulated to the Centers.

The Board is expecting the different partners in a MP to agree among themselves and identify the lead centre of the MP. The Board asked that the lead centre of each MP be thus identified within the next couple of weeks. If this issue cannot be resolved by the Centers themselves then the Consortium Board will make the decision.

Proposed 'Fast Tracked' Mega Program proposals

The Board received four proposals for 'fast tracking' namely Rice, Wheat, Maize and Climate Change. The Science Task Force approved the external reviewers proposed by the interim Consortium Office for each fast-tracked MP, as well as their terms of reference. The Science Task Force asked for the external review reports to be submitted to the interim Consortium Office by 31 May in recognition of the complexity of the reviewing task.

The Board, with the input from the Science Task Force, had the following preliminary comments, which they will review after the comments for the external reviewers are received:

Rice, Maize and Wheat

- Better define the breakpoint from existing programs and efforts – including justification for the new elements being proposed.
- The research methodology is not sufficiently clear nor is it sufficiently detailed to indicate feasibility of success. As such it does not provide a justification for the proposed budget.
- The partnership list is very long. There is a need to state credible engagement modalities for groups of partners (acknowledging that capabilities vary among the NARS).
- Need to clearly delineate impact pathways to achieve the stated productivity gains and claims of poverty reduction.
- Need to clearly state the mode of engagement for upstream or 'blue sky' and for downstream product development and delivery mechanisms
- The proposals need to state clearly how capacity building could be achieved for all the stakeholders involved.
- An effective and concrete mechanism is required in order to seriously take into account gender and capacity building issues.
- The linkages with the other MPs are not clear enough
- No clear statement of risks and assumptions in the impact pathway

Climate Change

- The proposal is consistent with the SRF; the quality of the science is good and there are relevant research questions. The matrix of outcomes, products and impact is well detailed
- Capacity building and gender are well addressed



- There is a need to ensure synergies in the cross cutting issues to avoid duplication of efforts and redundancies. A mapping of the activities in the various related MPs is required to optimize resources and efforts
- Comprehensive proposal but lacks a conceptual framework linking the four themes and sequencing the activities
- Relies on global assessments – the proposal should consider downscaling
- Some innovative approaches described, e.g. looking at virtual crops, and these need further elaboration of the involvement of appropriate research partners
- The governance model as described is lean but needs further examination

The Board will still consider these proposals as ‘fast tracked’ candidates and will make a decision virtually subject to (i) results of the peer review; (ii) the proponents addressing the concerns raised by the Board, and (iii) the proposals undergoing a budget review which the Board asked the interim Consortium Office to commission.

Further to the resolution of the Board at its March meeting, the endorsement of fast tracked MPs will not be at the expense of subsequent MPs and all MPs approved by the Board will be considered for funding by the donors.

Mega Program proposed budgets

It is the Board’s opinion that the preliminary MP portfolio budget is unrealistic and not well balanced overall. The Board notes there are no firm financing plans from the donors currently available so the system is working in a very uncertain financial context. How to adequately fund the MP portfolio is a top priority for the 8 June meeting with donors as there is a huge disparity between the donor funding reality and the budgets requested in the MP portfolio.

Submission of the MPs and SRF to the Fund Council

The Fund Council will receive the amended SRF and whatever MP proposals the Board decides to ‘fast track’. The Board decided that the MP concept notes will not be shared with donors as they are a ‘work in progress’. Instead, the Board Chair, in his report to the Fund Council will give an update on the progress on the MP portfolio (concept notes and ‘fast tracked’) and refer to the Boards’ comments on the MP concept notes and the progress on the platforms. This document will be made available to the Funders Forum.

The Board Chair agreed to prepare and send a letter to Fund Council prior to the Fund Council meeting in this regard.

Achieving impact with the MP portfolio

The Board recognizes and shares the donors and Centers commitment to impact, but notes that this does imply the need for significant increases in resources. In some circumstances, greater impact can occur through building capacity, engaging with national partners and assuming a role of advocacy toward national governments and donors. The Board sees MP1 as an avenue for a much greater impact, whilst capturing resources through country level programs. Working in MP1 will enable the research to be closer to the various socio-economic and agro-ecological environments where centers can work together and where stakeholders can engage.

The Board and the Centers acknowledge that research in MP1 is an exciting approach and a real change in the way the system has worked – however there still is a question of what should be the most appropriate scale to achieve this. The Board was encouraged by the Centers’ commitment to an integrated approach as expressed in MP1. Over and above the opportunity for resource



Consortium of the CGIAR Centers

generation in this approach, the Board sees that the greatest impact will be generated at the country level and through comparisons of what happens in different countries, drawing implications that cut across all countries concerned.

Transition funding (2011-2013) The Board took on notice the concerns presented by the Alliance on how centers will be funded during the transition period and how will the redistribution of priorities and resources among Centre be managed in an orderly fashion to avoid undue shock. As was pointed out by the Alliance to the Board, if no agreed mechanism/strategy is in place, risks for Centers and the system increase and may precipitate an ad hoc and uncoordinated downsizing at individual Centers.

The Board endorses the premise that the 2011 budget should not adversely affect the Centers. The Board confirmed that the Consortium will take the lead on financial negotiations with donors on this issue.

Performance Contracts

The Board noted its concern is authorizing performance contracts when the impact (i.e. well articulated results arising from effective and meaningful partnerships), as currently described in the MPs, is often not well defined and/or justified. In the Board's view the impact pathway and delivery of results as described in the MP concept notes and proposals are largely unsubstantiated. Milestones towards impact might be achievable. This is a topic that needs to be addressed with the donors at the June 8 meeting.

The Board shared with the member Centers a Draft Heads of Agreement (downstream contracts) between the Consortium and lead Centers and invited comments to the draft document. As next steps, comments will be taken into consideration and a lawyer, who has been engaged by the Consortium, will convert the text into a legal document and ensure that it is compatible with other documents, in particular the performance contracts between the Fund Council and the Consortium Board.

CEO Search and Selection

The CEO search and selection process has moved forward since the March meeting with the selection of an executive search firm, agreement on the profile of the CEO and approval of an advertisement and media exposure. The Board agreed that the selection of the CEO is a critical decision for the Board. Once a short list is prepared it will be shared with the entire Board. The Board as a whole expressed a wish to be part of the interview process.

Consortium Location

The search for a location from the five countries identified at the last Board meeting has progressed with positive responses received in writing from three countries and verbal expressions of interest from the other two. A visit by the Vice-Chair and the Board Chair has already taken place to France and visits to India, Kenya, Ethiopia and Italy will take place in early July (around 7-16). An invitation to bid for hosting the Consortium was prepared by the interim Consortium Office and sent to the short-listed countries. The Chair of the Task Force feels that the Board should be looking for a combination of a strong technical offer and a strong desire from the country to host the Consortium. He also confirmed that he wants to keep an open mind and deal with all countries in the same manner. A report on the results of these visits will be prepared by the Vice-Chair and circulated to the rest of the Board, along with the submissions received from the countries, in answer to the invitation to bid, for review, consensus on ranking and development of a negotiation strategy. It is hoped that there would be a conclusion by next Board meeting (early October).



Fund Council relations

The paper provided to the Board in their documentation outlined the activities the Task Force, with support and contributions of the interim Consortium Office has had over the past weeks. One of the issues the Task Force has looked into is that of system costs and fees. Another issue is in relation to the documents being put forward by the Trustee. What has become evident as a result of reviewing these documents is that legal advice is required as the documents are, in the Task Force's opinion, unbalanced and not in the favour of the Consortium. The Task Force Chair, with endorsement from the Board Chair, is engaging with an appropriately qualified legal firm (already identified), to go through the documents.

The Fund Office has circulated documents to the Task Force and expects to receive Board input in four weeks. In addition to legal advice it is suggested that there are other issues – some on principles such as mutual accountability – that require Board consideration. The Task Force plans to put together comments on the documents and share these with the rest of the Board for additional input.

A key upcoming meeting for the Board is the meeting with donors on 8 June. A discussion paper has been prepared by the Chief Officer and with comments from the Board members will be forwarded to donors attending the meeting to facilitate discussions on the following topics of strategic interest:

- Stability of funding
- Harmonizing reporting mechanisms
- Transition funding
- System level costs
- Performance agreements
- Proposing a concrete proposal for harmonizing/coordinating reviews of the MP proposals (not the 'fast tracked' but perhaps the others) with the ISPC
- Funding for genebanks and 'blue sky' research

The Board asked the Chief Officer to consider the comments provided in the Board discussion and to update the paper and have it circulated to the member Centers for their information.

Consortium resource requirements for 2010-2011 and the human resource requirements currently and post 2010

With input from a report provided by the Chief Officer, the Board made the following decisions:

- The Board agreed to include the costs for the Chief Officer (for the period Jan-June 2011) in the 2010 budget that has to be revised at the request of the Fund Office. It was agreed that in as much as the System Office units are not yet part of the Consortium – they are units formed as a service function to the Centers, the Consortium Board will submit Jan-Jun 2011 budget requests for these units but as distinct from the Consortium budget request.
- The Board approved the expenditure for additional human resources in the interim Consortium Office to support the Consortium. It was confirmed that the budget as prepared can absorb these costs.
- The Board approved the total expenses as proposed for submission to the Fund Office with the expectation that there will be flexibility between the budget lines.

Consortium communication plan

The Board endorsed the plan as presented by the acting Executive Secretary and committed themselves to working with the communication personnel in the implementation as outlined in the plan. Furthermore the Board agreed that it was their expectation that the Centers, through their Heads of communication, would collaborate in the implementation effort.



Consortium of the CGIAR Centers

A communication on the progress, report on the Board meeting and key strategic directions for the various MP concept notes will be publically available and on the web.

Concerns from the Alliance

The Board appreciated the issues raised by the Alliance, noting a great deal of congruence with what the Board had been discussing in their meeting i.e. transition funding, performance contracts, MP proposals, budgets and management, performance measurement, interactions with other elements in the CGIAR such as the ISPC and donors.

The Board acknowledged and accepted the formal resolution from the Alliance that it will cease operations on 31 May 2010 and that the Consortium will accept responsibility for the management of the personnel of the former Alliance Office (now working in the interim Consortium Office), with the 2010 agreed budget of the Alliance Office. If funds remain at the end of 2010, the Alliance agreed that the Consortium will take over these funds for their future operations. The Alliance will inform AIARC accordingly.

In regards to Consortium guidance on Centers attending the Funders Forum (15 July), the Board decided that It will be left to the Centers if they want to attend.

Next Board Meeting

The next Board meeting will be hosted by ICARDA in Aleppo. It will be a two day meeting (4 and 5 October) with a day's visit to the Centre (either before or after the 2 days of meeting).

The Board decided that it would be important that the Centers be invited for a half day of discussions with the Board on 5 October.

Other business

Shared Services and 'One Common System': The Directors of Finance are seeking recognition from the Board that one common system is a useful activity to engage with. They are not seeking funds from the Board but are planning to raise funds bilaterally. The Board has not had the opportunity to thoroughly review the concept of shared services. It concluded that it would be premature to comment on one aspect of shared services in isolation of all other aspects and that it cannot provide an endorsement until the CEO has had an opportunity to review the shared services concept and recommendations prepared by the Accenture consultants in 2009.

Gender Scoping Study: the Terms of Reference for this study have been prepared by the interim Consortium Office and approved by the Board Chair. The interim Consortium Office is currently seeking expressions of interest in undertaking the study from internationally recognised individuals/organizations.

Directors Liability: The Board agreed to obtain and pay the premium for Directors Liability insurance (to cover the Board Chair and members' liability against any claim made against them for a wrongful act committed, attempted, or allegedly committed or attempted). The interim Consortium Office was asked to obtain this insurance for each Board Member.