Summary Record of the First Meeting of the CGIAR Task Force on Structural Options and Organizational Alignment (TF 2)

The CGIAR Task Force on Structural Options and Organizational Alignment (TF 2) held its first meeting on May 27 at GTZ, Eschborn, Germany. Participants were Hans-Joachim de Haas (Co-Chair), Moïse Mensah (Co-Chair), Guido Gryseels, Marie de Lattre-Gasquet, Franklin Moore, and Geoffrey Mrema. Henning Baur, Lukas Brader, Paul Harding and Selcuk Ozgediz and Manuel Lantin participated as resource persons. Dennis Garrity (Chair of CDC Task Force on SSA) participated as observer.

Opening Statements

Mr. Stefan Helming, Head of Planning and Development Department, GTZ welcomed the meeting participants. Acknowledging the similarities of concerns and goals between GTZ and the CGIAR particularly in SSA, he expressed interest in the work of the task forces and wished the participants a successful meeting.

In their opening remarks, the TF 2 co-chairs emphasized the importance of the group’s task. They informed the members about the work that had been done in preparation of the meeting and pointed out that the focus of the TF is on Sub-Saharan Africa but that the implications of this work for the whole CGIAR system must be kept in mind. The first meeting essentially sought to have further clarity on the objectives of TF 2, to tune in with the work of Task Force 1, and to develop a detailed Work Plan.

Overview of the TORs and progress to date

The progress to date by the resource persons was briefly summarized – preparation of draft Work Plan, three draft questionnaires and a draft Review Paper.

The Task Force reviewed the TF 2’s terms of reference (TORs). It was pointed out that the TORs as presented had been endorsed by the Executive Council (ExCo) but have yet to be approved by the CGIAR. The following points were raised in the discussion:

- The work of the Task Force should not be constrained by the current CGIAR strategy
- The objectives of the restructuring need to be well-defined (as suggested for Phase 2)
- The objectives and activities of NEPAD are important and need to be referred to. The Task Force should seek inputs and feedback from NEPAD; although most interaction will focus on the RO/SROs
- Any new structure would be expected to last for 10-15 years
- The principle that “form follows function” is agreed but it is also recognized that, in some cases, form influences function (e.g., existing structure of the CGIAR influences the way NARS and SROs structure their projects and programs.) Case studies including perspectives from outside the CGIAR would be useful
Consultants
It was suggested that the two Task Forces jointly employ consultants to travel to Africa and collect information and perspectives that would be difficult to get through other means. The Co-Chairs asked Lukas Brader whether he would be available for this assignment. Joseph Mukibi was also suggested. Both Lukas Brader and Joseph Mukibi accepted (after the meeting). They will be travelling in August and September 2004 together with Eugene Terry who had been engaged for TF 1. It was suggested that all three consultants should work as a single team.

Review of change initiatives
The Task Force discussed the draft Review Paper on change initiatives in international agricultural research activities in sub-saharan Africa that had been prepared by Lukas Brader. This paper summarizes information on the FARA strategic plan 2002-2012, the long-term strategies of the Sub-Regional Organizations, the views of African NARS leaders, the CGIAR strategy for Africa, and a range of other documents. This represented an excellent start. The following points were raised in the discussion:

- African leaders want to see rural prosperity, not just poverty alleviation
- The CGIAR Centers by and large agree to the priorities set by the SROs, however, the priorities provide little guidance in defining the optimal research structure and allocation of responsibilities
- It is important to keep in mind how priorities were articulated. The question may be asked what is the relevant unit of demand? Are priorities to be set by a series of networks or by other means? Differences in influence and power – and how these may be addressed - need to be kept in mind
- It is also important to keep in mind that all NARIs are not equal and that the formula of having one NARI in each country may not be sustainable
- There is a perception that current priorities of the CGIAR in Africa are too much dictated by existing structures (function sometimes follows form!)
- The Task Force needs to ascertain that the right questions are being asked. To this end, it is suggested to include information and reports on science and technology policies from other organizations such as CTA.
- Many people have thought about change and yet little change has taken place. It is therefore suggested to add paragraphs on what has happened since the various strategies were adopted, what has not happened, and why things have not happened.
- It was suggested that the review paper should be presented in chronological order, concluding with a strong case for the establishment of TF2.
- It is specifically suggested to include in the report the results and recommendations of the recent EPMRs, SPAAR documents on the establishment of GFAR, the report of the CDMT, in particular its recommendations pertaining to the evolutionary approach to change (and how to reconcile this with the establishment of TF2), and the results of the meta-evaluation of the CGIAR done by the World Bank.
- There is consensus that integration of research efforts is not the same as coordination. What integration exactly means has yet to be defined
Brainstorming – Federation Model and Other Options

The Task Force briefly discussed some pros and cons of a Federation Model for the CGIAR. Dennis Garrity informed the Task Force that the CDC had agreed to form a federation and is organizing a retreat to work on the details in July 2004. A two-way dialogue between the TF and CDC on this topic was recommended. Further points raised were:

- Whether the federation model presents a viable organizational option for SSA depends on what powers and functions are delegated by the centers to the federal body and how the federal body is to be governed.
- The TAC study on structural change that was started in 1994 should be consulted.
- Sticking too narrowly to a purely agricultural agenda might be a mistake.
- Absorptive capacity in SSA is very different between countries, therefore modes of collaboration will have to be different too.
- There may be merit to look at Center activities in Central Asia and Afghanistan where new and possibly different modes of Center collaboration are being implemented.
- There is the perception that changing to a Federation Model would be costly in the beginning but could have very positive results in the long-term.
- The question was raised how to consider non-CGIAR Centers with activities in SSA such as ICIPE or AVRDC.
- The Task Force agreed that ideally one should begin thinking about the optimal CGIAR structure with a clean slate. This can be done intellectually, but when implementing any new structure, the reality of existing structures cannot be ignored.
- There is agreement that the research programs today are different from research programs in previous years and that there is a clear need for change.

Work Plan for Task Force 2

The first draft of the Work Plan was discussed and amended:

- A new phase (4) – interaction at AGM 04 - was added in order not to miss the opportunity of the AGM to both report on progress and to collect feedback and information.
- Phase 1 was extended to September 2004.
- There is agreement that intensive collaboration with the Centers is required throughout.
- The possibility of producing geographical maps showing CG research locations and zones of impact should be checked.
- CGIAR priorities for SSA have to be considered.
- A special CGIAR meeting in Spring 2005 may be advisable if the recommended changes are “significant”.

Questionnaires

For information collection, three draft questionnaires had been prepared by the resource persons and were discussed in detail by the Task Force. The following points were raised:
• Information on infrastructures and resources, as well as linkages with partners, should be collected with one single questionnaire.

• The “driver” of this questionnaire should be the location of the CGIAR offices or research sites. A location is defined by the presence of an internationally or regionally recruited staff member.

• Questionnaires will be sent to Centre DGs, with a covering letter signed by the co-chairs requesting that the forms be completed by the individuals deployed in the locations in Sub-Saharan Africa.

• It would be desirable to use data from the questionnaires for GIS mapping, possibilities to do this should be explored together with TF1.

• To make sure that data can be compiled easily, tick boxes rather than open questions will be used as much possible.

• It was suggested that data collection could be enriched by a desk study of EPMR reports.

• The second questionnaire on perceptions of the CGIAR’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats, will be sent to a wide range of stakeholders, including a list of people who are well informed about agricultural research in SSA in general and the CGIAR in particular.

• Perceptions should be collected on research management processes, and not just organizational structure.

• In addition to a web-based format for the questionnaires, paper copies should also be provided to avoid the risk of having a skewed set of respondents.

• Time is very short if we wish the consultants to follow-up the questionnaires and to present initial results to AGM04.

Joint Meeting with the Task Force on Programmatic Alignment (TF1)

The co-chairs of TF1 and TF2 summarized the discussions in the earlier meetings of their respective task forces. They outlined the key elements of their approaches and workplans. TF2 has adopted a plan to carry out its work in five phases: 1) compiling relevant information, 2) identifying guiding principles and criteria, 3) comparing structural options for the future; 4) assessing operational implications of structural options; and 5) preparing recommendations.

For their part, the TF1 co-chairs also outlined the steps that the task force has agreed to follow. The starting point would be a review of the needs and priorities identified and the strategies formulated by the SROs for their respective sub-regions and the role that the CGIAR centers should play. It will be followed by an analysis of the current CGIAR projects/programs and how they relate with the sub-regional priorities and strategies. The analysis would look at gaps, which CGIAR could fill as well as research areas, which are better handled by others. The outputs would be recommendations for programmatic realignment, i.e. a basis for consolidating, integrating, or dropping current programs, and suggesting new areas of work.
In the ensuing brainstorm session, the issues raised covered both process and substance. The following were some of the key points made:

- Need for an inclusive approach in the consultation phase, both in terms of sector (crop, livestock, forestry, fisheries) and stakeholder groups (NARS/SROs, Centers, donors, CSOs (farmers, NGOs, private sector, consumer groups), other partners (ARIs, universities); use of AGM04 (stakeholder meeting) as a forum for consultation; sub-regional meetings/visits as components of the overall consultation process.
- It is important to identify priorities that both the NARS/SROs and CGIAR Centers can address together.
- Recognition that poverty reduction is the goal and that economic growth is a tool for pursuing it.
- Analysis should cover both horizontal and vertical alignment of programs/projects.
- The task forces should consider the question of whether SSA is better served by regional rather than global structures.
- What would be the impact of the programmatic and structural changes contemplated in SSA on the other regions?
- Problems in SSA go beyond what research could address; market development is one area needing critical attention. To what extent should CGIAR be involved in it?
- Should the CGIAR Centers be transformed into an agricultural innovations network?
- The existence of “alternative sources of supply” for products of the CGIAR provides a rationale to consider also the work of other research centers (non-CGIAR and ARIs).

The task forces agreed to work closely together, ensuring a free flow of information and ideas between them. The possibility of combined TF1/TF2 questionnaires will be investigated; a desk study on recent EPMRs by the CG Secretariat will summarize both programmatic and organizational recommendations; and a three-person combined consultancy (Mukiibi/Terry/Brader) will take place in August/September 2004. The key guiding principle that "form follows function" was reaffirmed particularly since it was recognized that form can also limit or constrain function. The TF report would be one book consisting of two parts, the first from TF1 and the other from TF2. The TFs agreed on the following timeline:

- Progress Report to be presented at ExCo7 and AGM04; TFs will take the opportunity to hold further consultations with stakeholders at AGM04
- Second meeting to be held on Dec. 15-16, 2004 in Entebbe, Uganda
- Final meeting to be held on March 1-2, 2005 in Brussels, Belgium (at the Africa Museum)
- Final Report to be submitted in April 2005

The Task Forces fully realized the importance and enormity of their tasks. The TF1 co-chair, who is also the SC Chair, felt that the SC should also take major responsibility for
the programmatic alignment and would therefore suggest to the CGIAR Chairman and Director that TF1’s work be a joint undertaking of the CGIAR Secretariat and the SC.

Next Steps

After the joint meeting, TF2 discussed the next steps, focusing on activities that need to be undertaken immediately.

- The most urgent is the development of the data collection instruments (questionnaires) which are to be sent to the Centers (Henning and Paul). It was agreed with TF1 that, if possible, a single questionnaire would be sent out by late June. TF1 would comment on and add questions to the draft already prepared for TF2. Some of the questions were suggested during the meeting. A letter to the 15 DGs should be drafted asking for contact details for all locations in SSA (CG Secretariat).
- The agreed revisions will be incorporated into the draft Work Plan for TF2 by Paul Harding and Selcuk Ozgediz.
- Lukas Brader will revise the Review Paper on change initiatives.
- Franklin Moore with help from ICRAF/BMZ will explore the possibility for GIS mapping of zones of interest and zones of impact.
- The visits and field work, to be carried out jointly by Eugene Terry, Lukas Brader and Joseph Mukiibi should also be organized soon. The Co-chairs and the CG Secretariat will develop TORs.
- Preparation of the list of principles and criteria for evaluating structural options should be started soon (Henning), building on a review of the CGIAR’s principles (Marie).
- Progress reports for AGM 04 will be prepared and sent to ExCo for the meeting on 13/14 September 2004.

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