

Overview of the Activities and Achievements of the CGIAR Genetic Resources Policy Committee (GRPC), 1995 – 2002

Review of the GRPC, August 2002

The CGIAR Executive Council (ExCo) decided in March 2002 that the GRPC should be reviewed in the context of a wider number of changes that were being introduced into the governance and structure of the CGIAR overall. An external panel was requested to evaluate “how successful the GRPC has been in achieving its mission.”

The review concluded that the GRPC has fulfilled its mission in a “very satisfactory manner” and that “there is a need to retain such an independent mechanism within the CGIAR.” The panel recommended some adjustments to the Committee’s scope and composition in order to enhance its advisory role. The reconstituted GRPC was approved at the CGIAR Annual General Meeting in November 2003.

The GRPC review document is provided below. See also subsequent information documents: Terms of Reference, Composition, and Procedures of the New CGIAR GRPC (June 2003); and GRPC fact-sheet/handout (December 2006).

GRPC Terms of Reference

The CGIAR established the Genetic Resources and Policy Committee (GRPC) at International Centres’ Week in 1994 (ICW’94). The Committee’s Terms of Reference were as follows:

The purpose of the Committee is to advise the CGIAR on policy matters regarding genetic resources issues and to assist the Chairman of the CGIAR in his leadership role in this area. The Committee aims to enhance the openness and transparency of discussions on genetic resources policy issues within the CGIAR community. More specifically, the Committee has as its tasks to:

- Examine policy, legal and ethical issues regarding genetic resources and recommend CGIAR action as and when necessary.
- Monitor the Convention on Biological Diversity and the FAO Commission on Plant Genetic Resources processes as they relate to the CGIAR and recommend CGIAR policies or mechanisms as necessary.
- Monitor the implementation of the CGIAR agreement with FAO regarding the placement of ex situ plant genetic resources collections of the Centres under the auspices of FAO and recommend CGIAR action, if necessary.

The Committee reviewed these TORs at its first meeting in January 1995 and agreed that they were both adequate and appropriate.

In 1999, the terms of reference of the Committee and its membership were again reviewed. New terms were adopted at MTM’99, under which the GRPC was to:

- monitor and analyze policy developments concerning genetic resources, focusing on political, legal and ethical issues, at the national level and in relevant international fora, and recommend appropriate policy positions and action to the CGIAR Centres.
- monitor and analyze policy, legal and ethical developments within the CGIAR relating to genetic resources and recommend action as necessary to the Group;
- monitor the implementation of the agreements that placed the CGIAR Centres’ germplasm collections within the International Network of Ex Situ Collections,

- under the auspices of FAO. Where necessary, the committee will also assist in the interpretation of the agreements and propose any necessary changes;
- keep developments in intellectual property protection under review and advise the CGIAR on the further modification and implementation of the Centres' IPR guiding principles and related policies.

GRPC Composition

The original Committee comprised:

M.S. Swaminathan, Chair
Bo Bengtsson, Sweden
Jürg Benz, Switzerland
Robert Bertram, USA
Adel El-Beltagy, ICARDA
Geoffrey Hawtin, IPGRI, Secretary of the Committee
George Rothschild, IRRI
Maria Zimmerman, TAC

In 1996, two additional members were co-opted onto the Committee: Norah Olemba, Kenya, and Setijati Sastrapradja, Indonesia. In 1997, Timothy Reeves, CIMMYT and Chairman of the Centre Directors' Committee on IPR Committee, replaced George Rothschild, and in 1999, Usha Barwale-Zehr replaced Maria Zimmermann as the TAC representative.

At ICW'99 it was decided to reformulate the Committee to be more representative of the various stakeholder groups, while also allowing for continuity. The following were appointed/re-appointed:

M.S. Swaminathan, Chair
Robert Bertram, USA
Stein Bie, CDC
José Esquinas-Alcázar, FAO
Marcio de Miranda Santos, CBC
Carmen Felipe Morales, NGO Committee
Christine Grieder, Switzerland
Geoffrey Hawtin, IPGRI, Secretary of the Committee
Bernard Le Buanec, Private Sector Committee
Usha Barwale-Zehr, TAC
Godwin Mkamanga, NARS
Timothy Reeves, CDC
Carl-Gustaf Thornström, Sweden

In September 2000, Ronald Cantrell, the new Chair of the Centre Directors' Committee on IPR, replaced Stein Bie. In February 2001, Rene Salazar was nominated by the NGO Committee to replace Carmen Morales. The Committee has also benefited from the presence of numerous observers at its meetings – as listed in the individual meeting reports. A number of observers have attended several meetings of the Committee. These have included:

Frank Begemann, Germany; Susan Bragdon, IPGRI; Barry Greengrass, UPOV; Victoria Henson-Apolonio, CGIAR-Central Advisory Service on IP (CAS-IP); Sirkka Immonen, TAC Secretariat; Manny Lantin, CGIAR Secretariat; Gerald Moore, IPGRI; and Gabrielle Persley, Australia. Cary Fowler, IPGRI, attended most of the GRPC meetings as a resource person and assisted the GRPC secretariat in preparing many of the meeting documents and reports. Sheilah Ebel, IPGRI, was responsible for

organizing many of the logistical and other arrangements for the Committee meetings.

GRPC Meetings

The Committee has held 14 meetings as follows:

- 1) Chennai, India, 26 – 28 January, 1995
- 2) Washington, D.C. USA, 22 – 23 October, 1995
- 3) Rolle, Switzerland, 14 – 16 February, 1996
- 4) Stockholm, Sweden, 2 – 4 October, 1996
- 5) Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil, 25 – 26 April, 1997
- 6) London, U.K., 1 - 3 September, 1997
- 7) Aleppo, Syria, 2 – 4 May, 1998
- 8) Washington, D.C., USA, 20 October, 1998
- 9) Chennai, India, 19 February, 1999
- 10) Rome, Italy, 1 – 3 March, 2000
- 11) The Hague, Netherlands, 6 – 8 September, 2000
- 12) Aurangabad, India, 20 – 23 February, 2001
- 13) Rome, Italy, 3 – 5 September, 2001
- 14) Los Banos, Philippines, 21 – 22 February, 2002

Topics addressed by the Committee

Throughout the seven years of its existence, the GRPC has taken a very broad view of genetic resources policy. It has addressed a wide range of issues as can be seen from the agendas of the meetings and meeting reports. Major topics have included:

- Maintaining an overview, and providing advice regarding the implementation of the Agreements signed by the Centres and FAO in 1994, placing the in-trust germplasm collections maintained by the Centres within the International Network of Ex Situ Collections under the auspices of FAO. This has involved inputting to a wide range of strategies and procedures and endorsing a number of statements issued jointly by the Centres and FAO. These have addressed the practical implementation of the agreements and measures to be adopted in cases of suspected violations.
- Advising the CGIAR of developments in the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) and more specifically in the renegotiation of the FAO International Undertaking. The Committee has on several occasions recommended specific action to be taken by the Centres and/or CGIAR members.
- Maintaining an overview of developments in other international fora concerned with genetic resources policy matters including the Conference of Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), UPOV, WIPO, and the World Trade Agreements/WTO. The Committee has made specific recommendations to the Centres and CGIAR members as and when it felt this to be appropriate. A significant concern of the Committee has been to promote greater harmony among the positions adopted by individual governments in the different fora concerned with genetic resources.
- Reviewing, inputting to and endorsing guidelines and working principles for the Centres concerning their management of intellectual property.
- Addressing issues of biosafety, genetic use-restriction technology and, more recently, concerns relating to the Centres' involvement with GMOs.
- Advising CGIAR members and the Centres on the development and implementation of the Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources.
- Keeping abreast of, and providing advice on, developments in the CGIAR, the individual Centres, and in particular in the Systemwide Genetic Resources Programme (SGRP), the Systemwide Information Network on Genetic Resources (SINGER), and the Central Advisory Service on IP (CAS-IP)

- Advising on ethical concerns and farmers' rights
- Promoting further action within the CGIAR on neglected and underused species, and
- Providing input to the establishment of the Global Conservation Trust and making recommendations to CGIAR members regarding the financing of genetic resources work of the Centres.

Special meetings sponsored by the GRPC

The Committee has co-sponsored three workshops to address specific issues of importance to the work of the CGIAR:

Ethics and Equity

The GRPC, together with the Governments of Brazil, Sweden, Switzerland and USA, sponsored a workshop on Ethics and Equity in the CGIAR's Use of Genetic Resources for Sustainable Food Security. The meeting was held in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil, 22–25 April, 1997. About 50 people attended the meeting representing all major stakeholder groups. The meeting formulated ethical principles for the CGIAR in three main areas:

- Biotechnology, biosafety and partnerships with the private sector
- Sharing the benefits of genetic resources and plant improvement, including the CGIAR's trusteeship role for ex situ collections, and
- Partnership with farmers and rural communities

A professional ethicist and the GRPC worked further on the ethical principles formulated at the workshop. They were then presented to, and adopted by, the CGIAR at ICW'97. In adopting the principles, the CGIAR called on the Centres to use them as a basis for the development of their own guiding ethical principles.

Underutilized Crops

The Committee discussed the need to explore further the potential role of the Centres in undertaking research on underutilized species. In many cases these species are extremely important to the food security of the most disadvantaged sectors of society, which often live in remote and harsh environments. The GRPC thus sponsored, together with the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), IFAD and USAID, a meeting to explore the issues involved and develop action recommendations. The meeting, entitled "Enlarging the Basis of Food Security, the Role of Underutilized Crops", was held at the MSSRF headquarters in Chennai, India, from 17-19 February 1999. 53 participants attended the meeting, representing a broad range of stakeholders from 12 countries, including 9 Centres and TAC.

The workshop developed a series of recommendations for the Centers and donors. It led to the creation of a broad, multi-donor 'global' initiative on neglected and underutilized crops, coordinated by IPGRI.

International Treaty

With the adoption of the International Treaty by the FAO Conference in November 2001, the GRPC considered it timely and necessary to hold a high level inter-Centre meeting to explore the Treaty's implications for the CGIAR System. The GRPC, together with SGRP, CAS-IP, the CGIAR System Office and IRRI, thus convened an inter-Centre workshop at Los Banos from 18 – 20 February 2002. Representatives from 10 Centres, including 6 DGs, several Board members, GRPC members and resource people, participated in the workshop. A draft negotiating text was prepared for the new agreement to be signed by the Centres with the Governing Body of the

Treaty, after the treaty comes into force. This new agreement, once agreed to by all parties, will replace the current agreements with FAO. The workshop also drafted a revised interim MTA for discussion with FAO, and to present to the next meeting of the FAO Commission in October 2002. The GRPC meeting following the workshop endorsed the text of the draft interim MTA.

GRPC Reports and Statements

In addition to the 14 reports of its meetings the GRPC has issued, from time to time, specific statements for the use of CGIAR members and/or as an input to statements by the CGIAR Chair to various important international meetings. These are included within, or as annexes to the 14 meeting reports and have included:

- The CGIAR, Biodiversity and Sustainable Food Security: a statement by GRPC1 for the CGIAR Lucerne Ministerial-Level meeting, March 1995
- The CGIAR and the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Genetic Resources: elements provided by GRPC2 for the CGIAR Chairman's Statement to the Second Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Indonesia, November 1995
- Stockholm Statement on Genetic Resources for Sustainable Food Security: a statement by GRPC4 to the CGIAR members at ICW'96
- The CGIAR and the Renegotiation of the International Undertaking: recommendations of GRPC12 to CGIAR members in relation to the April 2002 negotiating session of the International Undertaking
- Statement by GRPC 14 as a contribution to the CGIAR Chair's statements to the World Food Summit: Five Years Later, Rome, June, 2002, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, September, 2002.

In addition to these statements, the GRPC has co-published:

- Proceedings of the Foz do Iguaçu workshop on Ethics and Equity
- Proceedings of the workshop on underutilized species, and
- A booklet/compendium of policies, guidelines and position statements concerning genetic resources in the CGIAR.

GRPC Reviews

GRPC6, in September 1997, discussed the future of the Committee and prepared a brief paper on the topic for the consideration of ICW'97. The paper, provided here as Annex 1, considered 5 questions:

- I. Is there a continuing need?
- II. What could we do better?
- III. What should our functions be?
- IV. How should we operate? and
- V. What should our membership be?

GRPC14 in February, 2002, discussed the proposed external review of the Committee and made the following observations:

"The Committee welcomed the review of its work, and noted the appropriate timing for this in view of the new International Treaty having recently been adopted. It discussed the challenge facing the review team, especially in assessing the GRPC's contribution to helping resolve issues before they assumed major proportions. The Committee believes its pro-active efforts have helped to resolve a number of politically sensitive situations by responding to concerns among a range of stakeholders. Its nature as a stakeholder-based committee has been particularly

valuable in this respect. Dr Thornström offered to make available text (extracted from a report to a Parliamentary commission on Swedish Policy for Global Development), concerning events (or rather “non-events”) that had occurred at ICW-2000 in relation to the CGIAR’s IPR policies. Dr Lantin offered CG Secretariat support to assist in its translation into English.” [The text of the report by Carl-Gustaf Thornström is available separately for the GRPC Review Panel.]

Conclusions

This paper only attempts to give a brief overview of the GRPC, covering the seven years of its existence from 1995-2002. More detail about its activities, recommendations and outputs are to be found in the individual reports of all the Committee meetings, the published proceedings of the special workshops sponsored by the Committee (on ethics and equity, and underutilized species) as well as the compendium of genetic resources policies, guidelines and statements.

Annex 1

Discussion Note: Future of the Genetic Resources Policy Committee¹

I. Is there a continuing need?

The CGIAR is one of the largest and most important institutions involved in both the conservation and development of genetic resources. International policies and policy debates can and do have a profound impact on the CGIAR's programs, priorities, and day-to-day work. Likewise the CGIAR can, in some circumstances, play an influential role in contributing to the development of international policies concerning genetic resources for food and agriculture, and in helping provide information and expertise to its partners that supports them in policy formulation.

Among the outstanding issues currently under consideration at the national and international levels are:

- ownership
- access
- benefit sharing
- farmers' rights
- intellectual property

The CGIAR's ability to understand and analyze the implications, and develop and implement appropriate policy in a coherent manner affects:

- status of the collections
- exchange of genetic materials
- ability to collaborate with NARS and farmers
- research partnerships with private sector and AROs

This situation warrants the continuation of a multi-perspective group at the System level.

II. What could we do better?

We did well in:

- monitoring a range of policy fora
- summarizing developments
- bringing policy matters to the attention of the CGIAR
- responding to initiatives from the centers (e.g. IPR Guidelines)
- supporting the Chairman of the CGIAR in his ambassador role (e.g. Stockholm Statement)

We could do better in:

- providing in-depth analysis of pressing policy issues
- examining their operational implications and proposing action
- developing focused reports
- availing ourselves of diverse perspectives (inside and outside the CGIAR)

III. What should our functions be?

¹ Statement prepared at GRPC6, London, UK, September 1997

- Monitoring policy developments
 - emphasize consequences for CGIAR
 - targeted reporting
- In-depth and selective policy analysis, and derived recommendations
- Oversee implementation of CGIAR Policy
 - ensure coherence
 - accountability
- Convener
 - access a range of viewpoints
 - facilitate system interaction with outside partners (e.g. the Ethics and Equity Workshop)
- Advocacy and outreach

IV. How should we operate?

- In addition to standing items, we should focus each meeting on one or two key issues and structure our reports accordingly
- We should prepare for in-depth treatment of these issues
- Invite on an ad hoc basis expertise and diverse perspectives - in line with principal agenda items
- We should prepare a rolling work program (1-2 years in advance) - stepped-up preparation may be required
- Our work should be supported by the IPGRI Policy Unit
- We should have a clearer plan for consulting within the CGIAR (e.g. NGO and PS Committees)
- Less frequent, longer (3-day) meetings not held in conjunction with CGIAR meetings.

V. What should our membership be?

The following composition is proposed:

- Chairperson
- 2 donor members
- 2 developing country members (above 5 members to be appointed by CGIAR Chairman)
- 2 Center Directors (appointed by CDC)
- DG of IPGRI
- 1 TAC member (appointed by TAC)
- 1 Board Chair (appointed by CBC)
 - within this membership, we should strive for gender, regional and stakeholder diversity
 - members serve in their individual capacity
 - 3 to 4 year term with rolling replacement