

# From Evidence to Influence:

## SPIA's Role in Strengthening CGIAR's Credibility, Impact and Positioning

**Dr. Travis Lybbert**

Chair, Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA)  
Professor, University of California, Davis (USA)



**“What if the most powerful story CGIAR could tell was not about success – but about learning?”**

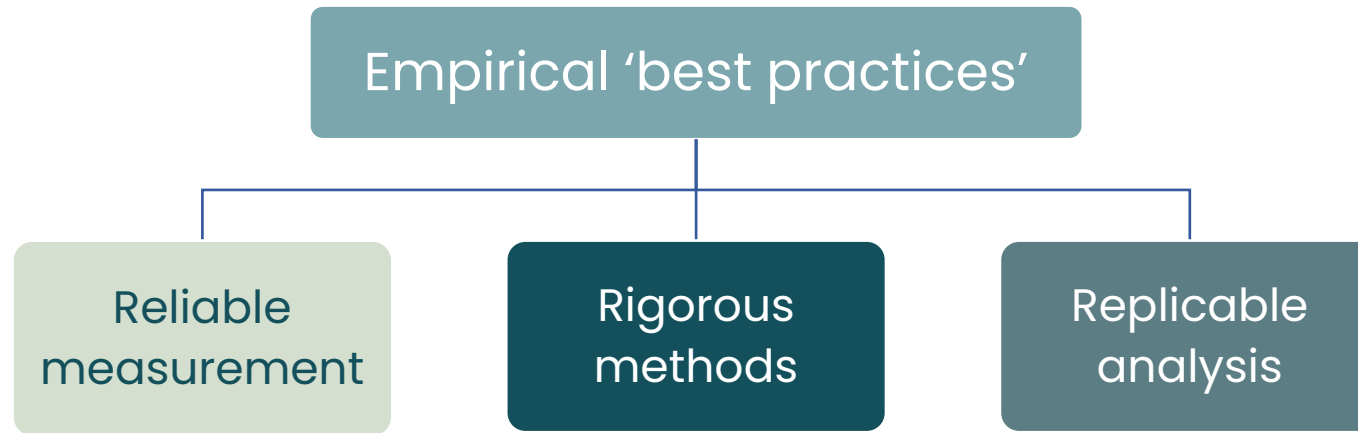
SPIA generates independent evidence about the impact and reach of CGIAR innovations to enable learning, accountability and priority-setting

# Overview

1. **Introduction to SPIA**
2. IPB Engagement with SPIA
3. SPIA Evidence → 'Showcase Successes'
4. Hidden Costs of Missing/Misleading Evidence

# SPIA Mandate, (ex post) Methods & Workplan

- 1) Expand & deepen evidence of impact of CGIAR investments on 5 impact areas
- 2) Support CGIAR's strong commitment to embed impact assessment into the System



*"Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards."*

Søren Kierkegaard

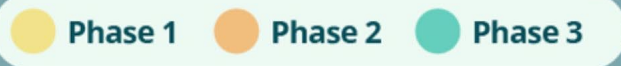
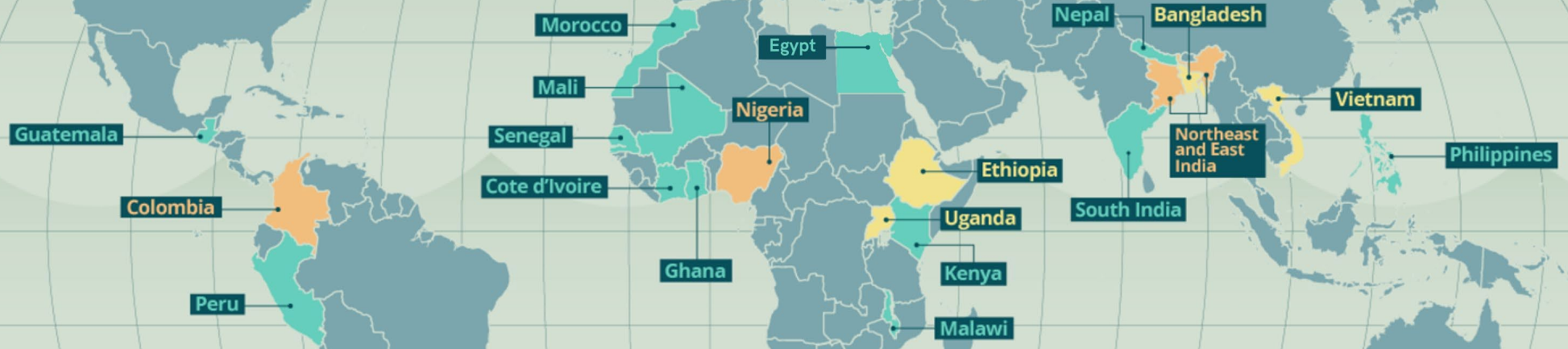
**Pillar 1:** *Ex post* evidence of **reach** of CGIAR innovations

**Pillar 2:** *Ex post* evidence of **causal impact** of CGIAR innovations

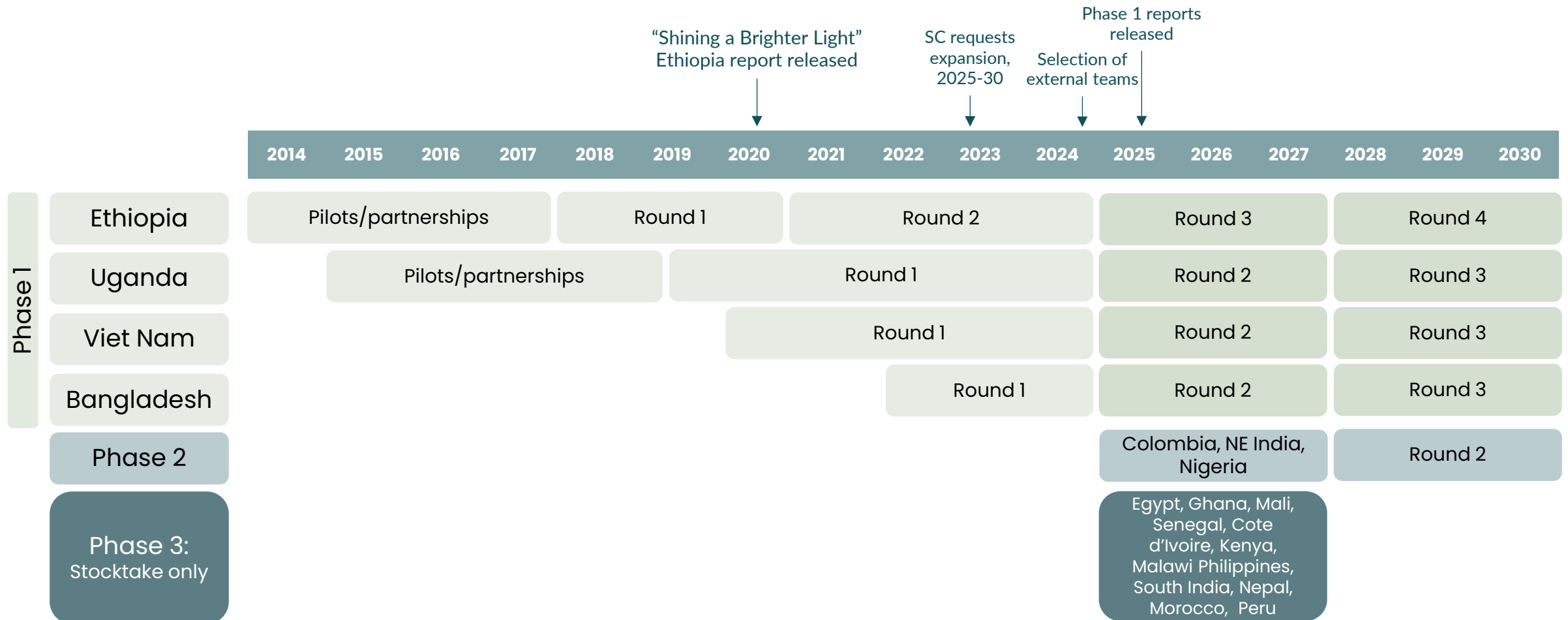
- where possible w/ best practices, often the best way to "understand backwards"
- success at scale is rare – 'test of time' filters and focuses on potential big wins

**Pillar 3: Use of evidence:** from "backwards" learning to "living forwards"

# Pillar 1: SPIA Country Studies



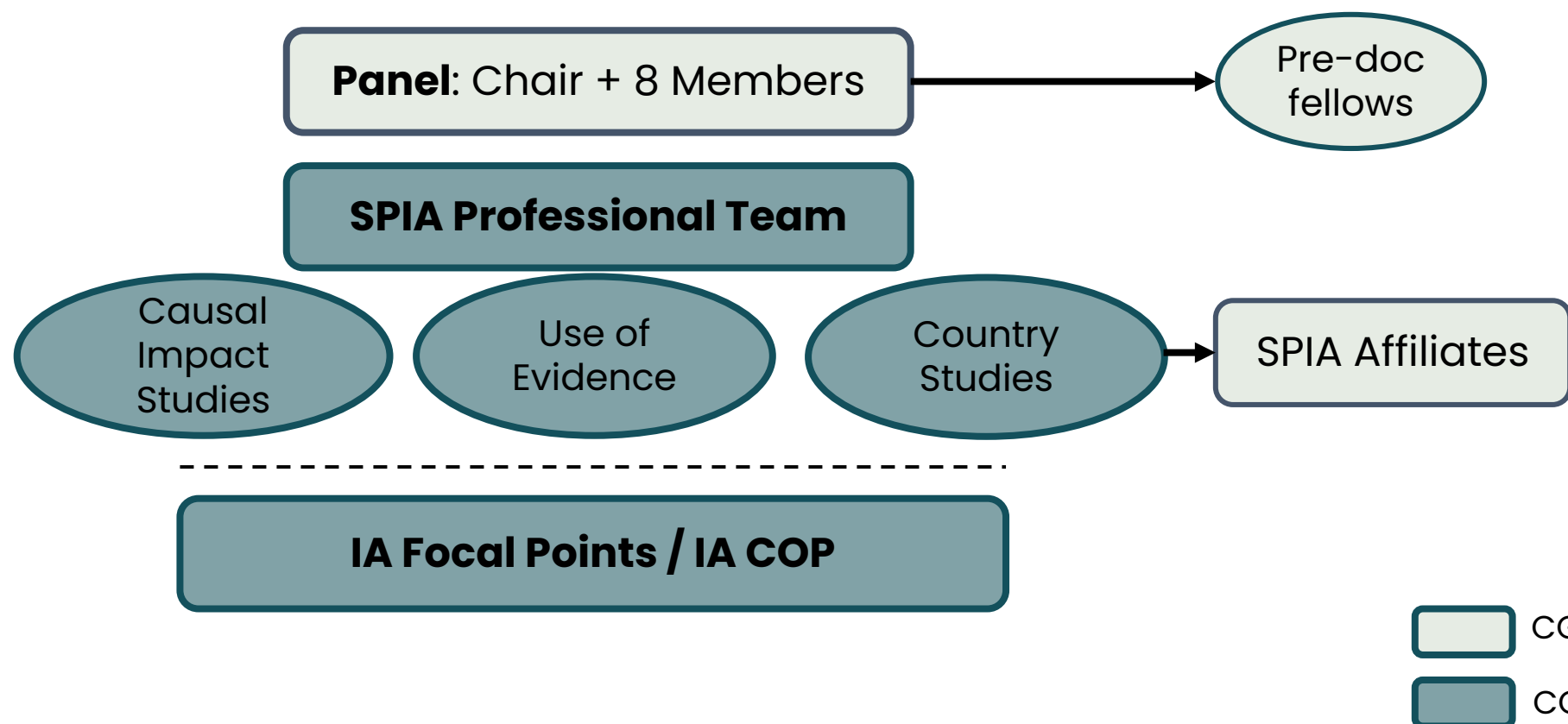
# Pillar 1: SPIA Country Studies



# 'Split Structure' & Independence of SPIA

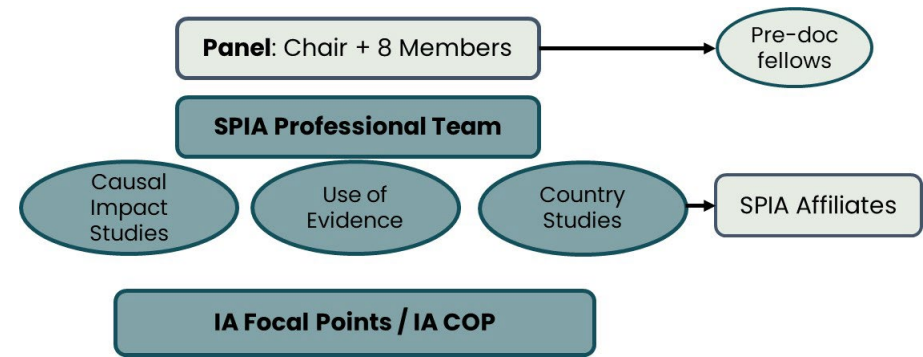
**SPIA independence:** Accountable to System Council via SIMEC

(Strategic Impact, Monitoring & Evaluation Committee)





**Panel:** Chair + 8 Members



**Travis Lybbert**  
SPIA CHAIR



**Kyle Emerick**  
SPIA MEMBER



**Sujata Visaria**  
SPIA MEMBER



**Monica Biradavolu**  
SPIA MEMBER



**Susan Godlonton**  
SPIA MEMBER



**Jenny Aker**  
SPIA MEMBER



**Jennifer Burney**  
SPIA MEMBER



**Robert Darko Osei**  
SPIA MEMBER

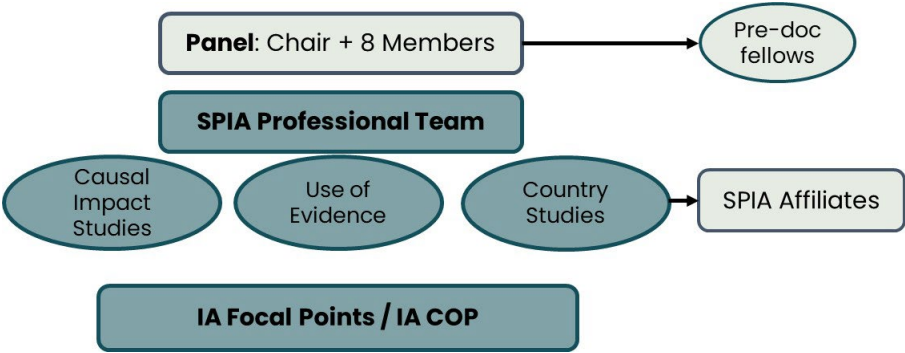


**Shilpa Aggarwal**  
SPIA MEMBER

**Total FTE for the Panel=0.8**



# SPIA Professional Team



**James Stevenson**

SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW, SPIA COUNTRY STUDIES

Country Studies Team



**Ricardo Labarta**

PRINCIPAL SCIENTIST, SPIA CASUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Causal Impact Team



**Ira Vater**

SENIOR MANAGER, SPIA PROGRAM MANAGEMENT UNIT

Program Management Team



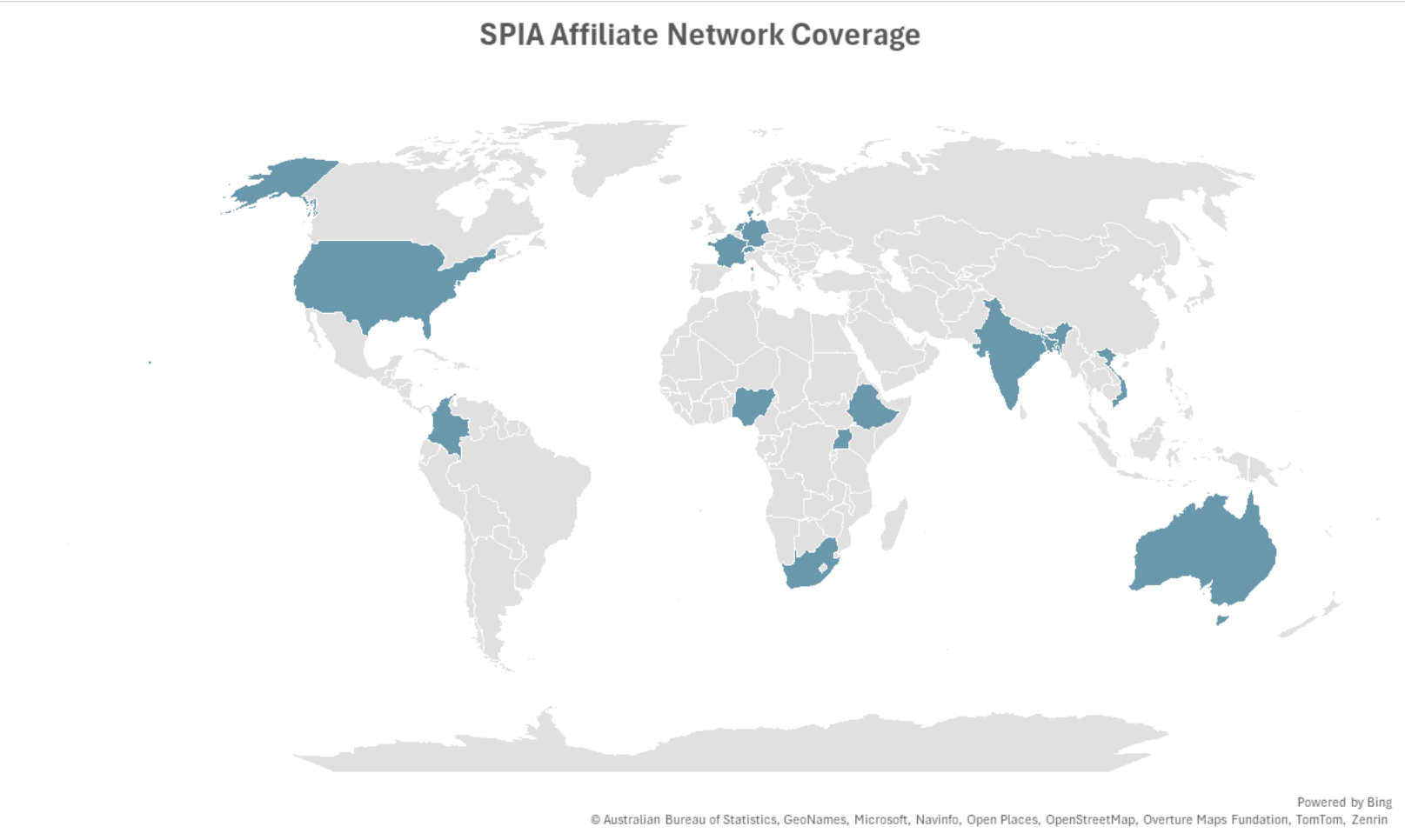
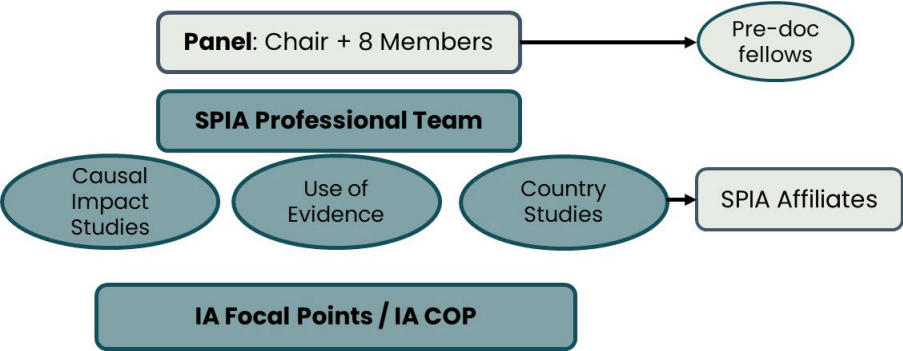
**Swetha Ramachandran**

SENIOR OFFICER, SPIA USE OF EVIDENCE

Use of Evidence Team



SPIA Affiliates: 26 PIs & Co-PIs



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- 2. IPB Engagement with SPIA**
3. SPIA Approach & 'Showcase Successes'
4. Hidden Costs of Missing/Misleading Evidence

# IPB – SPIA Engagement Per Mandate



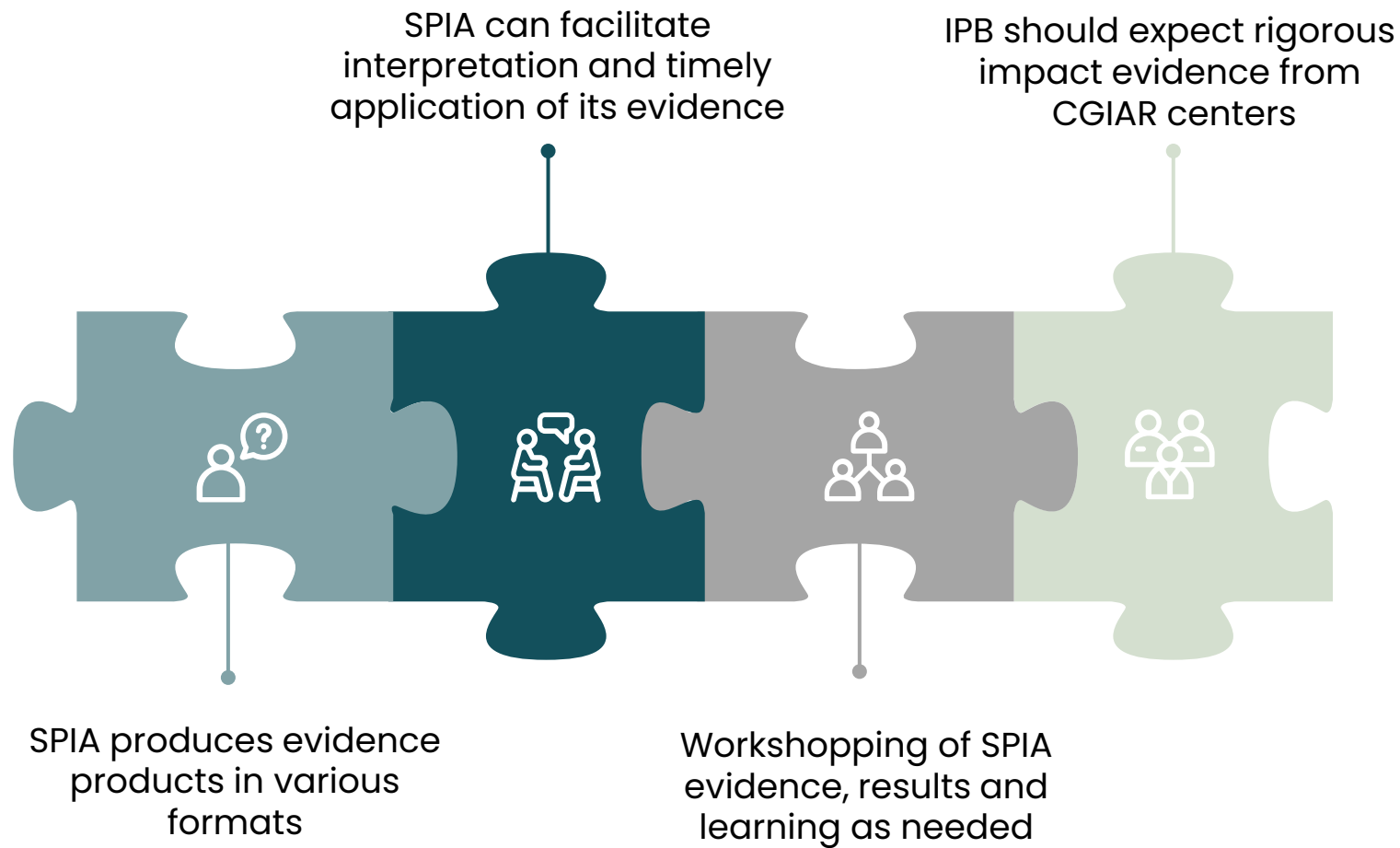
## CHARTER OF THE CGIAR SYSTEM ORGANIZATION

### Charter of the CGIAR System Organization

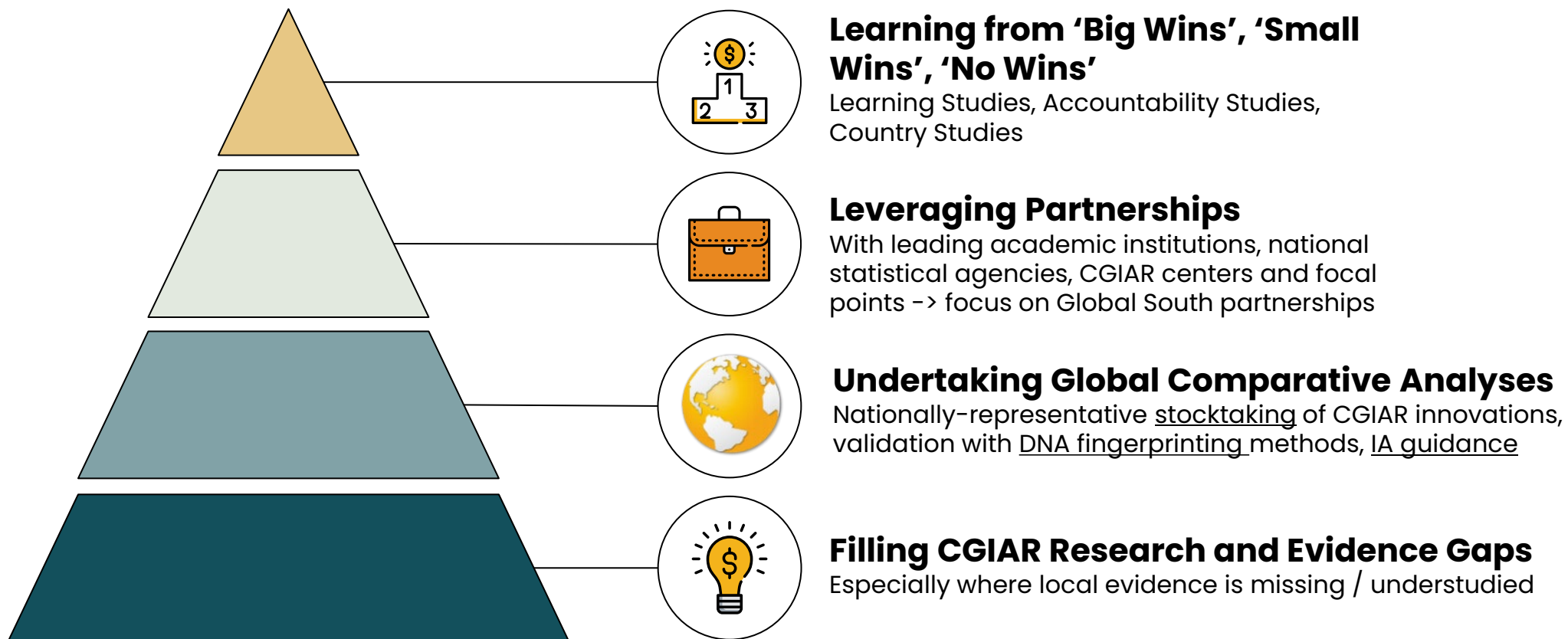
#### **Article 8:** Accountability and Functions of the Integrated Partnership Board

aa) *provide input on plans and  
financing of ex-post impact  
assessment of the CGIAR  
Portfolio proposed by **SPIA***

## IPB – SPIA Engagement Opportunities



# How Might SPIA Evidence Benefit the IPB?



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**“You can tell positive stories.  
You can tell true stories.  
Thankfully, some are both positive *and* true.”**



## CGIAR “Showcase Successes” from 2019–2024 SPIA Workplan



### Stress-Tolerant Varieties

- Drought-Tolerant Maize
- Flood-Tolerant Rice
- Salt-Tolerant Rice

**Bangladesh:** New salt-tolerant rice varieties reaching around 80 – 660 thousand households

**Vietnam:** Potentially reaching 2.4 million households cultivating salinity tolerant rice

**India:** Flood-tolerant Swarna-Sub1 increased its adoption by over 50%

**Ethiopia:** By 2022, 40% of Ethiopian rural households were cultivating DT Maize

**Mozambique & Tanzania:** Bundling DT-Maize with insurance resulted in yield increase of 230 kg/ha.\*\*



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*Zooming In*



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*Zooming In*

**Ethiopia:** By 2022, 40% of Ethiopian rural households were cultivating DT Maize



BILL & MELINDA  
GATES foundation

Drought-tolerant maize variety  
BH661 released in 2011



Standing  
Panel on  
Impact  
Assessment

SPIA Country Reports released  
in 2020 & 2024 showing  
increased reach



THE WORLD BANK

Joint working paper in 2025 on  
scaling mechanisms – Direct  
Seed Marketing Approach



## CGIAR "Showcase Successes" from 2019–2024 SPIA Workplan

*Zooming In*

**Ethiopia:** By 2022, 40% of Ethiopian rural households were cultivating DT Maize

Allows dynamic insights from panel data + DNA fingerprinting and builds Partnership in/out of CGIAR



BILL & MELINDA  
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## CGIAR “Showcase Successes” from 2019–2024 SPIA Workplan



### Public–Private–Partnerships for Scaling

- Aquaculture (GIFT)
- Livestock (IBLI, Poultry, Forage Grass)
- Mechanization

SC to SPIA:  
“What is the ROI on  
these ‘showcase  
successes’?”

Here’s a preview of  
ROI results for IBLI

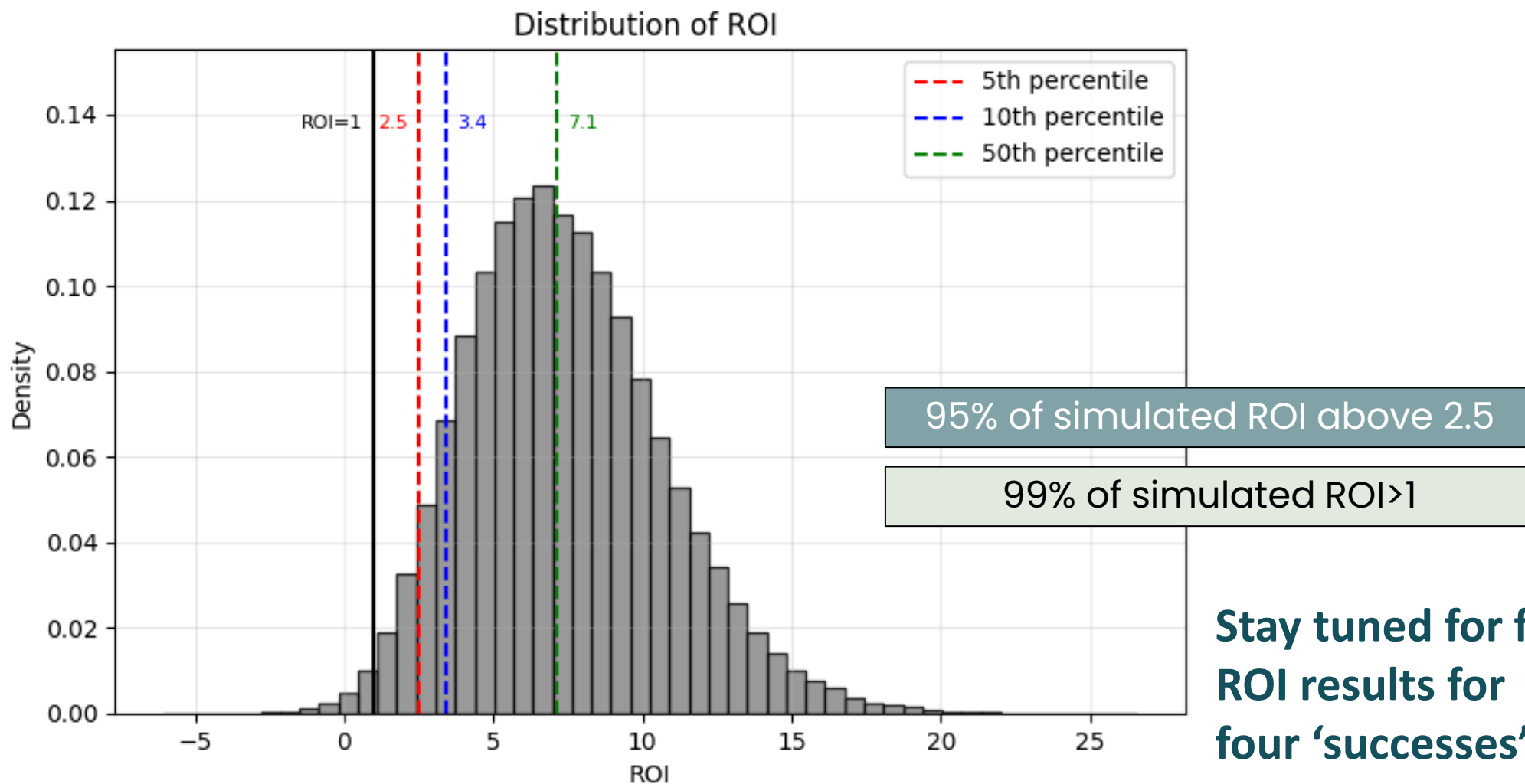
**Bangladesh:** Since 2018 Axial Flow Pumps have reached 12.6% of agricultural households (1.7M), with 90% rented.

**Ethiopia:** Forage grasses and poultry crossbreeds achieved adoption rates of 19% and 22%, benefiting 2.5M HHs.

**Bangladesh:** Genetically Improved Farmed Tilapia (GIFT) in 32% of all fishing villages

**Ethiopia:** IBLI improved HH incomes and education for children through private sector engagement.

# Distribution of ROI for Index-Based Livestock Insurance (IBLI)

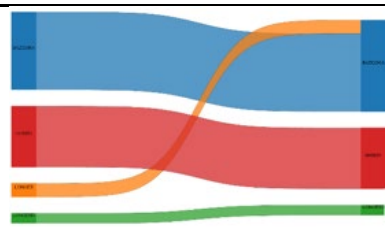
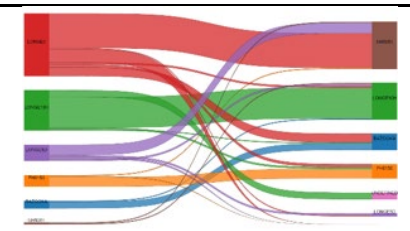
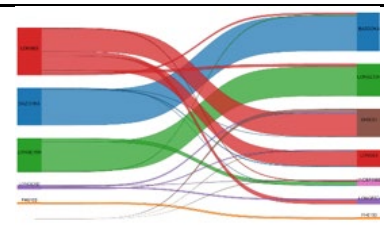
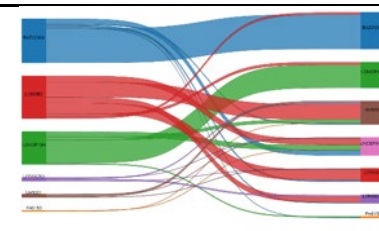


**Stay tuned for full ROI results for four 'successes' in October 2025**

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# Case 1: Maize Seed System in Uganda

| Production Stage                                                                   |                                                                                     | Aggregation Stage                                    | Distribution Stage                                                                   |                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Supply chain actor                                                                 |                                                                                     |                                                      |                                                                                      |                                                                                      |
| Seed Companies (in-house)                                                          | Outgrowers                                                                          | Seed Companies                                       | Agrodealers                                                                          |                                                                                      |
| Study seed collection method                                                       |                                                                                     |                                                      |                                                                                      |                                                                                      |
| 1 kg seed samples drawn from 50 cobs collected from field                          |                                                                                     | Seed lots sampled by DCIC during routine inspections | 1+kg bags purchased during inspection audits with DCIC                               | 1+kg bags purchased by mystery shoppers                                              |
| DNA Match Rate                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                      |                                                                                      |                                                                                      |
| 92%                                                                                | 47%                                                                                 | n/a                                                  | 71%                                                                                  | 61%                                                                                  |
|  |  |                                                      |  |  |

## 'Hidden' cost of missing 'seed supply chain' evidence

- Evidence of widespread genetic confusion on-farm → agrodealer/trader counterfeiting accusations
- Filling this evidence gap creates more nuanced and actionable seed system insights

## Case 2: Biofortified Crops in Uganda

### Estimating the Reach of Biofortified Crops to Farm Households: The HarvestPlus Model vs. National Sampling and Genotyping in Uganda

Ricardo Labarta, Travis J. Lybbert, and James Stevenson

Technical Note N. 11



**Table 1: Reach estimates provided by HarvestPlus and national sampling/genotyping models**

|                                       | HarvestPlus Model (2022) | National Sampling/Genotyping (2022) | Difference |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------|
| Orange-fleshed (OF) Sweet Potato (SP) | 1,243,023*               | 3.1% of SP-growing HHs              |            |
|                                       | 16.7% of rural HHs       | 1.2% of rural HHs                   | 14x        |
| High-Iron Bean (HIB)                  | 1,094,019*               | 6.0% of HIB-growing HHs**           |            |
|                                       | 14.7% of rural HHs       | 3.6% of rural HHs                   | 4.1x       |

### 'Hidden' cost of misleading monitoring evidence

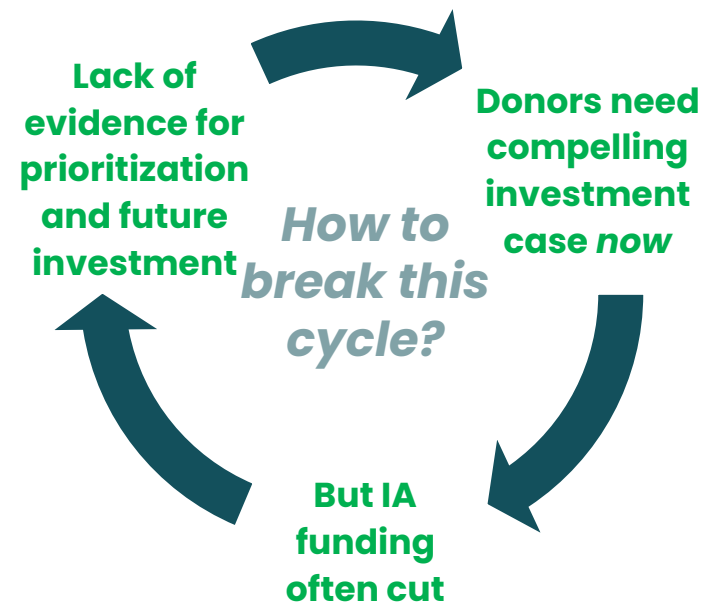
- Impressive causal evidence that OFSP can work as promised  
Up to 2018, exposure to OFSP in first 2 years of life significantly improved child growth
- But monitoring model became increasingly detached from ground reality
- Imagine the **generational benefits** that could have been realized IF
  - Model deficiencies had been recognized in real time...
  - Delivery modalities were corrected 6-7 years ago...

## Case 3: Missing evidence about \_\_\_\_\_ three years from now

What will we not be able to learn in the future if we stop investing in rigorous evidence today?

# Why Invest in IA even when budgets are tight?

- Commit to learning
- Generate future evidence



Short-term focus can undermine evidence & jeopardize future funding



IA expertise and best practices should still be integrated in early phases

A genuine institutional commitment to a learning and impact agenda in the CGIAR demands a long view

**“The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago.  
The next best time is today.”**



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