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IWMI Center External Review: Management Response

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Review title: CGIAR Center External Reviews: International Water Management Institute (IWMI) Review Report June 2026

Date Review Report was shared: 26 June 2026

Management Response Coordinator / Focal Point: Lili Delwaide, Chief of Staff, IWMI

Units Responsible for Implementing Recommendations: *Director General Office (DGO), Deputy Director General (DDG) and Research Leadership Team (RLT), MELIA Hub, Communications & Knowledge Management (CKM), Director Business Strategy and Delivery, Business Development Unit (BDU), Project Management Office (PMO), Country Representatives (CRs), Chief Operations Officer (COO), Human Resources (HR), ICT*

Other Units Consulted in the Management Response Process: Management Team

Date of Submission of Management Response: 14 September 2026 (Submission to IWMI Board of Governors)

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Overall Management Response Summary:

The International Water Management Institute (IWMI) welcomes the report of the Center External Review (CER) and thanks the members of the review panel, the CGIAR Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES), and the CGIAR System Council for the opportunity to participate as a pilot Center in this review process. Management has considered the report's findings and recommendations carefully and wishes to record its appreciation for the rigor and constructive spirit in which the review was conducted.

Management believes that the recommendations align closely with IWMI's current trajectory and offer a fair and accurate reflection of where the Institute stands today, i.e. on a positive trajectory of organizational maturation. The review arrives at a particularly opportune moment: IWMI is at the mid-cycle point of its current Strategy and is preparing to undertake a Strategy Refresh. Management intends to draw directly on the CER's findings to inform this process, ensuring that the recommendations are embedded in IWMI's forward planning rather than treated as a standalone exercise.

More broadly, the review reinforces IWMI's own objective of building organizational resilience and functioning as an adaptive institution in an operating environment that continues to change rapidly. Management sees the CER as a valuable contribution to strengthening IWMI's capacity to learn, adjust, and remain fit for purpose as its portfolio and partnerships continue to grow and diversify in a context – externally and in CGIAR – characterized by rapid and constant change. At the same time, Management acknowledges the review's observation that IWMI is facing increasing pressures on its absorptive capacity. Accordingly, the actions set out in this Management Response reflect a prioritization based on sequencing of actions and care in managing additional strain on the organization.

Management also wishes to flag, for factual accuracy, that the financial table on page 5 of the report requires correction: the figures overstate the funding IWMI received through the CGIAR pooled funding windows (Window 1/Window 2) in 2020–2021. The amounts shown reflect allocations made to the former Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE) Research Program, of which approximately 40 per cent constituted pass-through funding to partners rather than funding received directly by IWMI. The correct table is provided under separate cover.

Finally, Management underscores the importance of reading these recommendations in the context of IWMI's position within the CGIAR system. As a CGIAR Research Center, IWMI's ability to implement several of the recommendations — particularly those relating to institutional systems, funding architecture, and cross-Center coordination — depends in part on developments at the CGIAR system level. Management will pursue the actions set out in this response within IWMI's control while continuing to engage constructively with CGIAR on matters that require system-wide alignment.



RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS

Recommendation 1: Build on IWMI's strong alignment foundations to strengthen strategic learning and adaptive management across the institute.

Management Response to Recommendation acceptance status

Fully accepted*Not accepted* ☐

If recommendation is partially accepted or not accepted, provide reasons:

If recommendation is accepted or partially accepted, list, below, action(s) that will logically lead to its implementation, ideally to be initiated within 12 months of the date the recommendation was issued

Action point title	Action point text	Due date [month/year]	Lead implementing unit [only one per action point]	Additional units involved in implementation (if any)	If additional funding is required – how much and what is to be done if no funds are available?
Action point 1.1: Embed Theory of Change (ToC) development and consolidation in the Strategy Refresh preparatory phase	We will make Theory of Change (ToC) development and consolidation an explicit, foundational step in the preparatory phase of the Strategy Refresh, addressing the causal roadmap, complex change pathways, and critical and hidden assumptions underlying IWMI's work — ahead of its application to priority and target setting. Beyond this initial development, the ToC will be actively managed throughout implementation, linked to IWMI's MEL system to create a continuous feedback loop.	June 2027	RLT	DGO, Business Strategy and Delivery, MELIA Hub, CKM	No additional funding required; resourced through existing strategy refresh planning budget and staff time.
Action point 1.2: Sustain and strengthen the IWMI MELIA Hub as a complement to CGIAR-Wide systems	Continue to build out and integrate its own Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Hub to complement and, where necessary, compensate for CGIAR-wide systems that have not been consistently sustained, ensuring the Hub captures ToCs, contribution tracking, and learning loops on an ongoing basis.	December 2026	MELIA Hub	RLT, Business Strategy and Delivery, CKM	To be determined, pending assessment of capacity gaps and consideration of the opportunity for a shared services model with WorldFish.
Action point 1.3: Develop a systematic approach to	Utilize the Strategy Refresh as the framework for a systematic approach to learning and adaptive management. The Strategy Refresh will incorporate learning loops, feedback	November 2027	DGO, DDG	RLT, Business Strategy and Delivery	No additional funding required; resourced through existing strategy



RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS					
learning and adaptive management	mechanisms and evidence-based decision-making processes to support continuous adaptation and improvement across IWMI's portfolio.				refresh planning budget and staff time.
Action point 1.4: Leverage Country Strategic Roadmaps to align development challenges to priorities and targets.	Management will build on the Country Strategic Roadmaps and existing contribution matrices in developing causal roadmaps to inform the Strategy Refresh ToC; these will link development challenges to strategic priorities, target populations and geographic focus, outcomes and timelines as a foundation for planning, monitoring and adaptive management.	June 2027	RLT	CRs, DGO, Business Strategy and Delivery, CKM.	No additional funding required; resourced through existing strategy refresh planning budget and staff time.



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RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS

Recommendation 2: Strengthen IWMI's institutional evidence base for sustained contribution and impact through proportionate follow-up beyond delivery.

Management Response to Recommendation acceptance status

Fully accepted

Not accepted ☐

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Action point title	Action point text	Due date [month/year]	Lead implementing unit [only one per action point]	Additional units involved in implementation (if any)	If additional funding is required – how much and what is to be done if no funds are available?
Action point 2.1: Implement systematic output tracking	Develop a systematic approach to tracking the sustained use, adaptation, organizational adoption and downstream contributions for outputs and interventions, including tools, policy recommendations, innovations and partnerships; with outputs selected for tracking according to criteria for learning value and expected outcomes.	December 2026	DDG	MELIA Hub, Business Strategy and Delivery, COO	Additional funding may be required (app. \$20k) for MEL Platform system upgrade No additional funding required; resourced internally for improved output tracking and alignment with CGIAR PRMS but sustained use for selected outputs will be tracked immediately.
Action point 2.2: Establish an Impact Assessment and Evidence Framework	Develop a systematic and resourced approach to impact assessment that is guided by the Theory of Change and focused on generating evidence of long-term contribution and impact. This framework will define criteria for selecting projects, outputs and interventions for follow-up assessment based on factors such as sustained use, learning value, strategic importance and risk.	November 2027	RLT	DGO, MELIA Hub, Business Strategy and Delivery	No additional funding required; resourced internally
Action point 2.3: Develop a financing plan for implementation of the Impact	Alongside tracking within the MEL platform for selected outputs, establish a financing plan that leverages CGIAR resources, donor support and targeted assessments of legacy projects with strong potential for demonstrating post-project uptake and long-term outcomes.	December 2027	BDU	RLT, DGO, CKM	No additional funding required; resourced internally



RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS					
Assessment and Evidence Framework					
Action point 2.4: Utilise IWMI MELIA Hub as a strategic learning platform	Building on data collected across initiatives of all sizes, the MEL Hub will generate organization-wide insights on outputs, outcomes, and impact against institutional Theory of Change. It will also enhance implementation experience and efficiency, enabling IWMI to identify emerging patterns, validate strategic assumptions, and support evidence-based decision-making. Ensure insights are shared with donors and partners to disseminate learnings beyond the organization in support of IWMI's mission	September 2027	MELIA Hub	RLT, PMO, BDU, CKM	No additional funding required; resourced internally



RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS

Recommendation 3: Consolidate IWMI's existing and emerging institutional systems without losing local adaptability.

Management Response to Recommendation acceptance status

Fully accepted*Not accepted* ☐

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Action point title	Action point text	Due date [month/year]	Lead implementing unit [only one per action point]	Additional units involved in implementation (if any)	If additional funding is required – how much and what is to be done if no funds are available?
Action point 3.1: Implement new ERP system and strengthen integration and adoption of enterprise systems and processes	Build on ongoing investments in the ERP rollout, Job Framework, new Policy Framework and business process improvements to strengthen systems integration and consistent implementation across the organization, including the behaviours, incentives, and ways of working that need to shift alongside these systems and processes for them to be effectively adopted and sustained.	January 2027	COO	HR, ICT, BDU, PMO, Finance	No additional funding required; ERP rollout, job framework already budgeted for in the 2026 budget
Action point 3.2: Assess and prioritize the maturation of organizational systems	Undertake a structured assessment of progress in organizational systems improvements identified in the Organizational Growth Strategy (OGS) action areas and policy framework and apply this to development of a prioritized and sequenced plan for the next phase of systems maturation aligned to the Strategy Refresh.	March 2027	Business Strategy and Delivery	RLT, DGO, COO, CKM	No additional funding required; resourced internally
Action point 3.3: Leverage digitalization and automation to strengthen organizational systems while maintaining local flexibility	Advance digitalization and automation to improve the efficiency, consistency and effectiveness of core organizational systems and processes. Building on ongoing initiatives, including the development of a Digital Transformation Strategy and Digitization Assessment Framework (DAF), systematically identify, assess and prioritize opportunities for digitalization and automation across the	June 2027	COO	HR, ICT, BDU, PMO, MELIA HUB, DGO, CKM	Funding required for the digitization of systems and processes will be assessed on a process basis.



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	organization. The DAF will prioritize opportunities based on a set of criteria, including the balance between standardization and local flexibility.				



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RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS

Recommendation 4: Strengthen institutional capacity to sustain IWMI's growth and manage transformation risks.

Management Response to Recommendation acceptance status

Fully accepted

Not accepted ☐

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Action point title	Action point text	Due date [month/year]	Lead implementing unit [only one per action point]	Additional units involved in implementation (if any)	If additional funding is required – how much and what is to be done if no funds are available?
Action point 4.1: Strengthen organizational capacity to support sustainable growth	Integrate the next phase of the Organizational Growth Strategy into the Strategy Refresh to provide a change strategy to 2030 that explicitly addresses the capabilities, systems and capacities required to support IWMI's expanding portfolio, partnerships, operational footprint and resource base.	June 2027	Business Strategy and Delivery	DGO, RLT, COO, CKM	No additional funding required; resourced internally
Action point 4.2: Align change strategy to absorptive capacity, resource availability, and risk	Develop a sequenced change management plan for 2027-2030 that aligns staff capacity, financial resources and risk management to identified needs and priorities for sustaining growth. Integrate adaptiveness through regular reprioritization by management that incorporates feedback by staff.	February 2027	Business Strategy and Delivery	DGO, RLT, COO, CKM, CRs, HR	No additional funding required; resourced internally
Action point 4.3: Foster staff engagement and wellbeing	Include staff engagement, Organizational Performance Indicators, and feedback mechanisms in change management processes, aligned to internal communications, continued use of annual staff engagement surveys and development of associated action plans to respond to key engagement issues.	March 2027engage ment survey and associated action plans yearly	HR	DGO	No additional funding required; annual engagement survey currently funded by CGIAR
Action point 4.4: Update resource mobilization strategies to	Align resource mobilization plans to the changes underway in the development sector, including diversification beyond conventional ODA funding to expand funding from multilateral mechanisms, philanthropy, and	March 2027	BDU	RLT, DGO, CKM,	No additional funding required; resourced internally



RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS					
enhance capacity to sustain revenues and growth	private sector, while sustaining IWMI's public goods mandate. Build on the 2025-26 resource mobilization pivot and implement innovative sustainable revenue models for long-term value creation from selected research outputs.				
Action point 4.5: Implement the risk management maturity improvement roadmap	Deliver a phased program of risk management improvements, informed by the ERM Maturity Assessment and aligned with the CGIAR System Risks and Oversight Plan, to strengthen risk governance, oversight, and risk-informed decision-making across the organization.	Roadmap includes actions to December 2028	COO	IT, MT, PMO	No additional funding required; resourced internally



RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS

Recommendation 5: Make IWMI's operating model fit for the next phase of growth and impact by strengthening clarity, accountability, and continuity.

Management Response to Recommendation acceptance status

Fully accepted*Not accepted* ☐

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Action point title	Action point text	Due date [month/year]	Lead implementing unit [only one per action point]	Additional units involved in implementation (if any)	If additional funding is required – how much and what is to be done if no funds are available?
Action point 5.1: Develop a Future-Fit Organizational Design Aligned with IWMI's Growth Trajectory	Define a long-term organizational design vision that supports IWMI's next phase of growth and impact and ensure that the operating model can effectively support an increasingly diversified and impact-oriented portfolio.	June 2027	DGO, RLT	Business Strategy and Delivery	External support may be required - budget will be confirmed following procurement process.
Action point 5.2: Foster an Impact-Oriented Adaptive Organizational Culture	Carry-out an organizational culture diagnostic assessment and assess the cultural shifts required to support the delivery of IWMI's strategy, including the transition from an output-focused to an impact-oriented organization.	February 2027	DGO	All IWMI	External support will be required - budget will be confirmed following procurement process.
Action point 5.3: Strengthen Accountability and Decision-Making Across the Matrix Structure	Undertake a comprehensive review of accountability arrangements across IWMI's matrix structure, drawing on existing diagnostics, and establish clearer accountability mechanisms, including by embedding the Organizational Performance Indicators in performance management.	March 2027	DDG + HR	DGO, COO, Business Strategy and Delivery, HR	No additional funding required; resourced internally
Action point 5.4: Obtain ISO9000 Certification	Prepare for and obtain ISO9000 certification	December 2027	COO Office	DGO, RLT, Business Strategy and Delivery, CKM	No additional funding required; resourced internally



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Recommendation 6: Position IWMI's partnerships as a strategic architecture for impact, learning, and accountability.

Management Response to Recommendation acceptance status

Fully accepted*Not accepted* ☐

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Action point title	Action point text	Due date [month/year]	Lead implementing unit [only one per action point]	Additional units involved in implementation (if any)	If additional funding is required – how much and what is to be done if no funds are available?
Action point 6.1: Roll-out of subrecipients procedures	Finalize and implement IWMI's Subrecipient Procedures under the Partnership and Funder Engagement Policy, establishing a consistent framework for partner selection, due diligence, risk assessment, accountability and learning mechanisms, partner capacity strengthening, monitoring, and evaluation of partnerships.	December 2026	Director, Business Strategy and Delivery	PMO, BDU, Procurement, HR	No additional funding required; resourced internally
Action point 6.2: Partnership Strategy	Update the Partnership Strategy and integrate it into the Strategy Refresh, ensuring that partnerships serve as more than a route to delivery, leverage the strengths of IWMI's place-based relationships and advance organizational priorities. This includes increasing IWMI's focus on upstream and donor partners aligned with IWMI's diversification strategy.	June 2027	Director, Business Strategy and Delivery	RLT, BDU, CKM, DGO	No additional funding required; resourced internally
Action point 6.3: Review Partnership Agreements	Undertake a comprehensive review of IWMI's Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) to assess their strategic relevance, effectiveness, and alignment with organizational priorities, and identify opportunities to strengthen, streamline, renew, or discontinue partnerships as appropriate.	February 2027	Director, Business Strategy and Delivery	PMO, BDU	No additional funding required; resourced internally
Action point 6.4: Capacity building of Country Representatives	Deliver targeted capacity-building initiatives for Country Representatives to enhance partnership development, network management, and stakeholder engagement capabilities, thereby strengthening IWMI's	December 2026	Directors for Impact Asia and Africa	BDU	No additional funding required; resourced internally



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	national partnerships and country-level influence across IWMI's countries of operation.				
Action point 6.5: Resourcing for partnership management	Appoint a Partnerships Management Specialist to provide dedicated oversight of IWMI's partnership portfolio, strengthen partnership governance and performance management, and support the implementation of the Partnership Strategy across the organization.	March 2027	Director Business Strategy and Delivery		Funding required for this action will be estimated based on the graded job description.



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Recommendation 7: Build on IWMI's strong publication, repository, and Open Access systems to strengthen proportionate quality and lifecycle governance for its diversified output portfolio.

Management Response to Recommendation acceptance status	Fully accepted	<i>Not accepted</i> ☐
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Action point title	Action point text	Due date [month/year]	Lead implementing unit [only one per action point]	Additional units involved in implementation (if any)	If additional funding is required – how much and what is to be done if no funds are available?
Action point 7.1: Quality Assurance Framework for IWMI's Outputs Portfolio	Develop a quality assurance framework for the full range of IWMI outputs, including publications, datasets, digital tools, models, AI-enabled products, policy products and capacity-sharing materials.	June 2027	DDG	RQA Research Quality Advisor	To be confirmed – This work may be outsourced in parts
Action point 7.2: Develop IWMI Digital Transformation Strategy	The Digital Transformation Strategy will strengthen governance of Digital and Data assets and ensure that digital tools, platforms, datasets and AI-enabled products remain secure, accessible and well-maintained	June 2027	DG, COO, DDG	ICT, CKM, RLT	External support is under procurement. Est. cost is approx.. \$150,000
Action point 7.3: Review and develop procedures and guidelines	Implement fit-for-purpose guidelines, procedures and operational directives to support the consistent application of the Intellectual Property Policy, Data Protection Policy and Research Ethics Policy adopted through the new Policy Framework	March 2027	Director, Business Strategy & Delivery	COO, RLT	No additional funding required; resourced internally
Action point 7.4: Lifecycle Governance Framework for IWMI Outputs	Update IWMI's governance approach to strengthen the institutional oversight of publications, datasets, digital tools, platforms and other knowledge products. Governance arrangements will be tailored to the intended use, value, risk and lifecycle of each product type, ensuring quality, stewardship, accessibility and long-term institutional value.	June 2027	DDG	CKM	No additional funding required; resourced internally



RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS

Recommendation 8: Reinforce IWMI's global thought leadership and distinctive value proposition.

Management Response to Recommendation acceptance status

Fully accepted*Not accepted* ☐

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Action point title	Action point text	Due date [month/year]	Lead implementing unit [only one per action point]	Additional units involved in implementation (if any)	If additional funding is required – how much and what is to be done if no funds are available?
Action point 8.1: Finalize and embed IWMI's strategic narratives into Strategy Refresh	Finalize and integrate IWMI's strategic narratives within the Strategy Refresh to clearly articulate IWMI's distinctive value proposition.	October 2026	CKM	RLT, DGO	No additional funding required; resourced internally
Action point 8.2: Strengthen synthesis of IWMI's impact and contribution, including to CGIAR broader outcomes	Synthesize evidence, lessons and impact across projects, regions and science domains, that demonstrate how IWMI's water-related research and applied knowledge contribute to policy influence, institutional adoption, scaling, and CGIAR's wider food, land, water and climate systems agenda.	June 2027 (aligned with Strategy Refresh process)	RLT	CKM, MELIA Hub	No additional funding required; resourced internally
Action point 8.3: Identify IWMI flagship products and develop a supporting business plan	Identify a portfolio of flagship IWMI products, platforms and services that demonstrate IWMI's value proposition and thought leadership. Develop business plans for each flagship product, including target audiences, value proposition, impact pathways, partnership and delivery models, resource requirements, and long-term sustainability approaches.	December 2027	RLT	CKM, DGO, Business Strategy and Delivery	To be determined
Action point 8.4: Post-implementation	Undertake a review of the implementation and effectiveness of the 2026 Global Processes Engagement Plan to assess outcomes, identify lessons learned, and inform priorities,	March 2027	DGO	RLT, BDU, CKM	No additional funding required; resourced internally



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review of IWMI Global Processes Engagement Plan 2026	partnerships and engagement approaches for future global processes.				