

Review of Culture and Engagement in CGIAR: Management Response

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Date Evaluation Report was shared: 2 December 2025

Management Response Coordinator:

Rebecca Williams, Director, People & Culture, System Organization

Units responsible for implementing recommendations:

People and Culture, Office of the Chief Scientist, Finance and Digital Solutions, Legal, P&C Functional Area Committee, Center P&C Leads, Center Digital Leads.

Other Units consulted in the Management Response Process:

Office of the Chief Scientist, Gender Equality & Inclusion Accelerator, Digital Transformation & Data Intelligence Business & AI Solutions, P&C Functional Area Committee, Integrated Partnership Internal Audit Executive.

Date of Submission: 8th January 2026

Overall Management Response Summary:

Management wishes to formally acknowledge the efforts of the IAES team and extends gratitude to all individuals involved for their dedication and collaborative spirit throughout the assessment process. The recommendations presented have been received with appreciation and are valued.

The recommendations provided serve to reinforce the ongoing strengthening of CGIAR's organizational culture, integration of Gender, Diversity and Inclusion (GDI), data governance, and reporting, which are welcomed.

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The management responses aim to be pragmatic, balancing both ambition and the realities of structural and resource limitations. Emphasis is placed on integrating these recommendations at the leadership level, enhancing governance, and setting realistic expectations for the development of data, systems, and organizational capacity.

The Culture & Engagement team (formerly GDI) structurally sits within the System Organization People & Culture function. For the purposes of this Management Response and for avoidance of doubt, the Culture & Engagement team is referred to throughout as People & Culture.

Key highlights:

- **Balancing Autonomy and System-Wide Guidance**

The Culture & Engagement action plan operates with the understanding that Centers maintain full autonomy and decision-making authority. Centers benefit from system-wide guidance provided by People & Culture.

The GDI framework and accompanying Action Plan are intended for integration into leadership systems, competency frameworks, and initiatives across the system that foster inclusion, accountability, and wellbeing.

Progress across the CGIAR System requires embedding Culture & Engagement (C&E) initiatives at the levels of Executive Leadership, Governance, and within the overall organizational strategy.

- **Future Alignment Through the C&E Progress Index**

Looking ahead, alignment between CGIAR and Centers strategies will be further strengthened by the introduction of the C&E Progress Index. This index (currently under development), will establish measurable commitments, clarify roles, and define reporting frameworks. Its implementation will be subject to approval by the Global Leadership Team (GLT).

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- **Addressing Workforce Data Challenges**

Management recognizes and appreciates the acknowledgment of significant challenges related to workforce data. Collecting consistent and timely people data presents complexities, especially for contingent or complementary staff, due to varying definitions across Centers.

- **Governance for a Unified People Database**

The recommendation to create a unified people database highlights the necessity for clear governance structures. Previous attempts to achieve a System-wide People Database have stalled due to a lack of partnership alignment. It will be important to set out defined ownership, access protocols, accountability measures, and permitted uses.

In summary, it is essential to emphasize that the Culture & Engagement Action Plan extends far beyond data collection and compliance. People & Culture play a strategic role in thought leadership, leadership development, talent management advisory services, and the ongoing delivery of training and workshops throughout the system, all of which are tailored to meet the specific needs of individual Centers. To note that the sustainability of delivery for these initiatives will require ongoing capacity and resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS			
Recommendation 1: Clarify Organizational Aspirations (EQ 1): CGIAR's programmatic strategy (currently 2030 Strategy) should articulate the type of organization it aims to be/the principles shaping its culture and finalize Gender strategy.			
Management Response to Recommendation acceptance status	Fully accepted ☒	Partially accepted ☐	Not accepted ☐
Management Commentary	The 2030 Programmatic strategy is currently in progress, requiring time for full implementation. All Centers have a budget allocation for gender and gender needs will be integrated across the Science Portfolio, with the intention to track integration with specific KPIs.		

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RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS						
				We acknowledge that the 2030 Strategy does not specifically address gender, diversity and inclusion but see this as an opportunity to reflect this in the gender policy, currently under development.		
<i>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</i>						
Action point title	Action point text	Due date [month/year]	Lead implementing unit [only one per action point]	Lead implementing and reporting staff owner [specify one per action point only; title and unit]	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: Gender KPIs	Establishment of gender KPIs across the Science Portfolio	December 2026	Office of the Chief Scientist	Director Gender Equality & Inclusion Accelerator		
Action point 1.2: Gender Policy	Finalization, approval and adoption of Gender policy	December 2026	Office of the Chief Scientist	Director Gender Equality & Inclusion Accelerator	People & Culture	
Recommendation 2: Integrate and link the GDI framework and the Action Plan to the CGIAR strategy, ensuring values such as inclusivity, integrity, and accountability translate into organizational practices.						
Management Response to Recommendation acceptance status			Fully accepted ☒		Partially accepted ☐	Not accepted ☐
Management Commentary						

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RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS						
			Management agrees that it is essential to integrate the Culture and Engagement Action Plan into the CGIAR Strategy. There are a number of ongoing, and planned, initiatives to make sure this translates into organizational practices. However, is important to recognize that each CGIAR Center has the autonomy to shape its own values and competencies, which together form that Center’s unique culture. The System Organization does not have the mandate to dictate how these values are translated into local organizational practices; however, there are existing practices and future opportunities to better align this work. The establishment of the combined assurance functions and December 2025 approval of the escalation framework presents an opportunity to strengthen future organizational practices and further embed values across the organization, working via the P&C Functional Area Committee and endorsement from the ICI, a committee of the Global Leadership Team.			
			<i>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</i>			
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Action point 2.1: Competency Framework Development	Competency Framework developed in discussion with IWMI, IRRI and WorldFish for consideration for adoption by other Centers, adjusted to their	December 2027	People and Culture	Director, People & Culture	P&C FAC/All CGIAR Centers	Assessment of funding required to take place and to be adjusted based on Center engagement.

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RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS						
	organizational needs and timelines.					
Action point 2.2: Reinforcement of competencies	Reinforce core competencies/cultural values through system-wide programs such as the LEAD Together program, middle manager programs, Culture workshops, wellbeing initiatives, and celebrations (e.g. International Day of Women and Girls in Science), which provide shared platforms for advancing these values.	December 2027	People and Culture	Director People & Culture	P&C FAC/All CGIAR Centers	Additional funding may be required for scaling initiatives further.
Recommendation 3: Focus System Council Reporting (EQ 4): Ensure information provided to the SC aligns with its oversight role and strategic priorities. Present a concise, high-level bullet-point summary of the critical issues for decision-making, with detailed materials available separately.						
Management Response to Recommendation acceptance status			Fully accepted ☒		Partially accepted ☐	Not accepted ☐
Management Commentary			Management fully aligns with this recommendation and notes that this has been implemented with effect from the System Council meeting in December 2025.			
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RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS						
				per action point only; title and unit]		
Action point 3.1: Focus System Council Reporting	Periodic updates to the System Council regarding Culture & Engagement progress on strategic objectives will be concise and high-level. Requests for decision and endorsement as well as obstacles and problematic areas will be presented in succinct bullet points. Detailed support materials will be shared in an annexure as required.	January 2026	People & Culture	Director, People & Culture	N/A	N/A
Recommendation 4: Formalize GDI Integration with centers (guided by the IFA) (EQ 11) including: a. Formalize alignment of center strategies and Action Plans with GDI Action Plans. b. Assign GDI roles, responsibilities, and targets to align with the GDI Framework and forthcoming Gender Policy. c. Define measurable commitments and reporting frameworks. d. Identify and monitor risks to GDI Action Plan implementation.						
Management Response to Recommendation acceptance status			Fully accepted ☐		Partially accepted ☒	Not accepted ☐
Management Commentary			The agreement by the GLT, which brings together the DGs of all Centers, to implement the C&E Action Plan provides a strong foundation for collective commitment. While the Culture and Engagement Progress Index is still under development, it will be an important tool to measure progress on the Action Plan in a consistent and transparent way and enhance alignment. Management notes that formalizing Center GDI/C&E Action Plans and the corresponding roles and responsibilities at the Center-level can be coordinated through Integrated Partnership-wide mechanisms (including the GLT, FAC and ICI Forum), but cannot be enforced by any one party of the partnership.			

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			The Progress Index will provide an overview of how the Action Plan is being implemented and integrated at Center levels. In relation to recommendation 4 (d), People & Culture already consult closely with Risk Management and contribute to the risk register. However, this can be strengthened, and the recommendation is fully accepted and welcomed.			
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Action point 4.1: Develop and implement the C&E Progress Index	Develop C&E Index with the ICI Functional Area Committee (FAC) and targeted stakeholders through a co-creation in Q1/Q2 of 2026 based on the C&E Action Plan and informed by the Workforce Engagement Survey data. GLT approval of the Index will be sought by the end of Q3 2026. The Progress Index will define	December 2027	People & Culture	Director, People and Culture	Center P&C Leads	Requirement for funding an FTE to lead C&E Progress Index

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	measurable commitments and reporting Definition of roles and responsibilities will be integrated into the work on the Progress Index, at the system-level as part of the Index reporting					
Action point 4.2 C&E Progress Index reporting commitments and cycle	Measurable commitments are defined through the C&E Progress Index. Annual reporting cycle established.	December 2027	People & Culture	C&E Progress index Project Manager TBD	Center P&C Leads/FAC	Funding for FTE to lead C&E Progress Index
4.3. C&E Progress Index dashboard	Dashboard developed to show Index results internally to Centers and governance.	December 2027	People & Culture	C&E Progress index Project Manager TBD	Digital Solutions (Progress Index dashboard development)	Cost estimate for data collection module/system & dashboard: \$10K
Action point 4.4: Risk Monitoring	Ensure a risk register to support the implementation of the Culture and Engagement Action Plan 2025-2027 which is embedded in the overall risk management plan.	December 2026	People & Culture	C&E Progress index Project Manager TBD	Integrated Partnership Risk and Internal Controls Executive, P&C FAC	Funding for FTE to lead C&E Progress Index
Recommendation 5: Improve Data Governance and Access (EQ 6, EQ 7, EQ 9): a. Establish secure anonymized data access mechanisms (e.g., CSV/JSON export) to enable quality assurance without compromising privacy. b. Accelerate consultations with P&C Leads, Data Focal Points, and technical staff for the C&E progress index of co-development. c. Resolve inconsistency by aligning the public dashboard with the official workforce definition or formally revising the definition.						
Management Response to Recommendation acceptance status			Fully accepted ☐		Partially accepted ☒	Not accepted ☐

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Management Commentary			Point a, is not accepted as it would jeopardize the privacy of the data and there is no evidenced demand or utility for such exports. Should the mapping of users and their needs (Recommendation 8) reveal such demand, it will be reconsidered.			
			Point b is accepted. Though its relevance to the recommendation on data governance is unclear and this work is covered under other recommendations (e.g. Recommendation 4).			
			Point c is accepted. The nomenclature used on the external dashboard will be corrected to replace mentions of “workforce” with “staff”. For reference, the definition of workforce in the GDI framework: “workforce” means individuals who have a contractual relationship with a CGIAR Entity, such as members of regular staff cadres, members of non-regular special assignments categories, holders of short-term contracts, holders of job-contracts, learner-participants and third-party contractors; regardless of their position, type of employment, or duty station.			
			Full workforce data, in line with the C&E Action Plan, will remain available on the internal website. Improvements are implemented annually to enhance the usability and security of the dashboards. Currently, Single Sign On (SSO) is being enabled for internal dashboard access, which will improve the security of the data, while facilitating access to it by authorized users.			
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See action 4.1						
Action point 5.1 Updating of external dashboard terminology	The terminology on external webpages and dashboards will be updated by replacing 'workforce' with 'staff'. External dashboards are limited to showing staff only at the request of Centers.	February 2026	People & Culture	Consultant, Culture & Engagement	Digital Solutions +Web team	
Recommendation 6: Enhance Dashboard Utility: Define user archetypes (e.g., center managers, science leads) and tailor dashboards to their needs with automated governance reports, analytics, and benchmarking.						
Management Response to Recommendation acceptance status			Fully accepted☑	Partially accepted☐	Not accepted☐	
Management Commentary			This recommendation is welcomed, as the dashboards are seen as valuable tools whose utility can be enhanced. However, it is premature to commit to “tailor dashboards to [archetypes]’ needs” as the current time lag in data is likely a necessary improvement to make the dashboards and data relevant for decision-making (e.g. cross-system staffing of Programs and Accelerators, expert finding, etc.). Hence, it is important to note that the recommendation is fully accepted contingent on Recommendation 10 being completed. The creation of a real-time People Database would require a CGIAR-wide people data sharing agreement and more technical and human resources than are currently in place. Additionally, there is quite a lot of work still to be done towards aligning Center data for cross-system utility. The ongoing work on the common job framework and classification will help further this.			
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Action point 6.1: User archetype mapping and needs assessment	Conduct needs assessment with key stakeholders of CGIAR people data.	December 2026	People & Culture	Consultant, Culture & Engagement	Finance and Business Solutions.	Technical developments will incur costs, which are difficult to estimate at this juncture, before the needs of stakeholders have been assessed.
Recommendation 7: Track GDI Integration (EQ 11): Monitor and report on the extent to which GDI Action Plans are incorporated into centers' strategies and action plans.						
Management Response to Recommendation acceptance status				Fully accepted ☒	Partially accepted ☐	Not accepted ☐
Management Commentary				The agreement by the GLT, which brings together the DGs of all Centers, to implement the C&E Action Plan provides a strong foundation for collective commitment. While the Culture and Engagement Index is still under development, it will be an important opportunity to measure progress on the Action Plan in a consistent and transparent way and enhance alignment.		
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See Action 4.1						
Recommendation 8: Seek a GLT-supported mandate and governance framework to enable responsible integration of people data with program performance (and, where relevant, financial) data.						
Management Response to Recommendation acceptance status			Fully accepted ☒		Partially accepted ☐	Not accepted ☐
Management Commentary			Management will consult with the CGIAR Global Science Team and GLT with a view to establishing aligned objectives, mandates, and governance arrangements to promote the responsible integration of people, performance, and financial data; consistent with Financial Framework Agreements as well as agreed Portfolio Management Arrangements and the 2025–30 Technical Reporting Arrangement.			
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Recommendation 9: Reactivate Inactive ERGs (EQ 4): Assign a specific project that all centers can learn from and provide an advocate for them.						
Management Response to Recommendation acceptance status		Fully accepted ☒		Partially accepted ☐		Not accepted ☐
Management Commentary		Note that Employee-led Resource Groups, or ERGs, have evolved to become colleague communities at CGIAR. By nature, such communities are voluntary, employee-led groups that bring together staff with shared identities, lived experiences, or common interests. While CGIAR's colleague communities are operationally supported by Culture & Engagement, their structure, objectives and activities are self-determined, driven by members. It will be necessary to review staff appetite and interest for taking existing communities forward in 2026, and support those with sufficient commitment and input from leadership and members.				
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Action point 9.1: Assess CGIAR's colleague communities and reactivate those with sufficient employee	Review and revive or suspend WIRES (Women in Research and Science), FAIR (Forum Against Inequality and Racism), Pride@CGIAR and Youth	December 2026	People & Culture	Culture & Engagement P&C FAC	Current membership of existing colleague communities	Without funding for activities and programming there is limited scope for colleague communities to develop.

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interest and traction.						
Recommendation 10: System-Wide Data Adoption (EQ 7): Complete adoption of the CGIAR 360 People Database: a. Establish a People Data Framework Agreement (modelled on Financial Framework Agreement). b. Appoint a business champion and address capacity gaps at center levels.						
Management Response to Recommendation acceptance status				Fully accepted ☐	Partially accepted ☒	Not accepted ☐
Management Commentary				The action points of this recommendation are partially accepted as the “complete adoption of the CGIAR 360 People Database” is outside the control of the CGIAR System Organization. This must be agreed upon by the GLT and cascaded down to Centers for implementation. System-wide people and skills data sharing at CGIAR holds immense potential, and greater integration would make it more agile, informed, and impactful. To realize this opportunity: 1) the GLT will need to prioritize, agree on, and define the scope of integration; 2) strong collaboration with Digital Solutions and Legal to develop data governance and protection frameworks will be essential; and 3) resources must be aligned at both the system and Center levels. Taken together, these steps can unlock the full value of CGIAR’s people and skills data for innovation and decision-making. From a technical perspective, Microsoft Fabric is already in place with secure architecture and toolkits enabling Centers to connect, extract, transform, and share data according to established standards. Additionally, significant work has been completed by P&C to create a standard vocabulary for people data and map Center’s current approaches to the common approach. Key barriers to full adoption of the People Database are: a lack of system-wide data governance policy; capacity gaps (some Centers lack the technical infrastructure and human resources to support this process, centrally SO teams are also stretched); and strong incentives to share people data at the system-level.		

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Action point 10.1: Seek GLT approval to Establish a People Data Framework Agreement	Seek GLT approval to create a mandate/framework agreement for Centers to share people data. Currently, there is a gap in identifying an empowered entity to lead this project with GLT support. This should be the first item to resolve—supported by a clear business case and defined technical, people, and governance prerequisites. Without this, the project risks encountering significant roadblocks.	December 2027	People & Culture	Director People & Culture	SO Digital Solutions/P&C Leads/FAC, Legal FAC	
Action point 10.2: Data Framework Agreement	Establish a CGIAR-wide People Data Framework Agreement (modelled on Financial Framework Agreement). Current Center-specific agreements are not scalable. A unified data-sharing agreement across all centers for all data types would provide a sustainable way forward.	December 2027	People & Culture	Director People & Culture	SO Legal Digital Solutions, Legal FAC	

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Action point 10.3: Appoint Business Champions	Appoint a business champion and address capacity gaps at Center levels.	December 2027	People and Culture	Center P&C Leads	SO Digital Solutions Global Leadership Team	Additional positions or consultancy support will be needed at Center and System levels to develop and sustain data flows and accuracy. There is no capacity currently to drive this work.