

Role of ExCo Committees

Proposal for Reorganization

At its sixth meeting in May 2004, the Executive Council (ExCo) discussed, at the request of its members, the roles and need for the ExCo Program and Finance Committees. Discussion focused primarily on the lack of added value and continuing need for the ExCo Program Committee (ExCo/PC) in light of the overlap of its responsibilities with those of the Science Council (SC). Members of ExCo/PC also contended that the committee does not add value, as presently organized. ExCo noted that the ExCo Finance Committee (ExCo/FC), on the other hand, deals with more substantive issues and adds value. Members also discussed the desirability of ExCo/FC taking on additional responsibility on governance matters.

In light of its discussion, ExCo concluded:

- *There is not a clear need for the ExCo/PC, but ExCo should determine how it would address issues that are programmatic in nature without a PC. One option would be using ad hoc committees on matters that require small group attention before ExCo discussions.*
- *ExCo/FC should continue, perhaps as a “Governance and Finance Committee” of ExCo, with an expanded mandate.*
- *ExCo members are invited to suggest alternative organizational modalities to improve the performance of ExCo.*
- *The CGIAR Secretariat should develop a proposal on ExCo organization and send to ExCo for discussion then to the CGIAR for approval. A decision can be made virtually and does not have to wait for the AGM or another face to face meeting.*
- *Rotation of committee membership should be synchronized with that of full ExCo.¹*

ExCo Mandate

ExCo acts on behalf of the Group between AGMs on matters delegated to it by the Group, and carries out the functions specified in its Rules of Procedure. These include responsibility in the areas of goal setting and planning, monitoring implementation, evaluation, and self governance. (For a detailed list of functions in each of these areas, see Attachment 1.) ExCo can carry out its responsibilities as a committee of the whole, or by delegating tasks to standing and/or ad hoc subcommittees which then report to the full ExCo. ExCo/FC and PC were established, with the concurrence of the CGIAR, to facilitate ExCo’s business by providing specialized and focused attention to CGIAR’s financial matters and programs, respectively.

¹ ExCo 6 Summary of Proceedings, June 2, 2004.

Why Delegate?

There are several valid reasons to establish subcommittees, but one of the most compelling is to enable the committee of the whole to do its job better. However, it is important to note that although subcommittees make important contributions and can facilitate decision making, the entire group remains accountable for actions taken based on subcommittee recommendations. Members are still required to make informed decisions based on a careful understanding of the issues involved. Subcommittees are simply a mechanism that allows the full group to cope with the limited amount of time available, and the complex information with which they must deal.

Other important reasons that ExCo may consider when deciding to establish and delegate tasks to a subcommittee include:

1. Specialization/expertise: discussion of some items may require review by a specialized group (e.g., members with experience in legal matters). Items may be discussed in more depth and utilize the experience, talents, and expertise of its members and, thereby, bring before ExCo a set of well-informed proposals.
2. Efficiency: a smaller subcommittee can discuss items more thoroughly and in a shorter amount of time than a similar discussion by the committee of the whole. In addition, when consensus decision making is the rule, a subcommittee can help generate consensus in the full body by incorporating diverse viewpoints in its recommendations.
3. Sensitivity/confidentiality: when discussing appointments and other issues, they are better discussed within a smaller group, especially matters involving individuals. Such items could be handled by an ad hoc or standing committee.
4. Minimize conflict of interest: ExCo is essentially a committee of stakeholders. Conflicts of interest could arise when discussing matters concerning one or more of the stakeholders represented in ExCo. Having a subcommittee which excludes that stakeholder (e.g., nominations for committees), could avoid a conflict of interest situation (or the perception thereof).

Depending on the nature of the tasks to be delegated, ExCo can establish standing and/or ad hoc subcommittees. For major activities that are of a repetitive, ongoing nature, standing subcommittees can work well; ad hoc subcommittees are better suited to handle specific, time-bound, one-time activities. In either case, to ensure effective organization and operation, the tasks, focus and responsibility of the subcommittee, its relationship to the full ExCo, including reporting requirements, would need to be defined clearly.

With the foregoing principles in mind, one could attempt to separate the functions of ExCo that can best be handled by the committee of the whole and those that could be delegated to a subcommittee, as shown in the table below.

Major ExCo Functions	Of interest to the whole ExCo	Could be delegated to a subcommittee
<i>Goal setting and planning:</i>		
• coordination and oversight of the CGIAR-wide strategic and operational planning processes	X	
• recommendations to the Group on the System's strategic and operational plans and the selection of Challenge Programs, drawing on inputs and advice from the Science Council and other stakeholders; deciding on planning grants to assist in the preparation of CPs	X	
• recommendations to the Group concerning policies and decisions on resource mobilization and allocation plans	X	
• recommendations to the Group on medium term plans and annual financing plans for the System and its advisory and support units	X	X
• requests to the Science Council (SC) for scientific advice on programmatic and other Systemwide strategic issues	X	
<i>Monitoring implementation:</i>		
• monitoring administrative actions arising out of the decisions of the Group, including those pertaining to resource mobilization and allocation	X	X
• monitoring and reporting to the Group on the progress, quality and effectiveness of Challenge Programs, with advice from the SC	X	
<i>Evaluation:</i>		
• oversight of evaluation activities on behalf of the Group, with support from the Science Council and the Secretariats	X	X
• recommendations to the Group on actions to be taken in the light of evaluations of the performance and impact of the Centers and Challenge Programs	X	X
<i>Self Governance:</i>		
• recommendations to the Group concerning key appointments to Systemwide posts (e.g., Science Council and SPIA Chairs and members, CGIAR-nominees on Center boards)	X	X
• oversight of the work programs and performance of advisory and support units	X	X
• advice and counsel to the Group on all other matters of Systemwide governance	X	

Options for Consideration

As requested, the CGIAR Secretariat invited ExCo members to make suggestions on future organizational modalities. Based on the decision taken at ExCo 6, comments received and the analysis presented above, three options emerge for the consideration of ExCo and the CGIAR. Each option is accompanied by a list of advantages and disadvantages.

Option 1:

Maintain both the ExCo/PC and ExCo/FC, however, modify the TOR of ExCo/PC to reduce overlap of responsibilities with those of the SC. Also, the committees would consist of CGIAR members only and rotation would be synchronized with that of full ExCo (i.e. one-half of membership to rotate every two years following AGM).

Advantages:

- Reduces conflicts in responsibility;
- Sensitive matters can be discussed by smaller groups;
- Increases efficiency of ExCo.

Disadvantages:

- Several ExCo members have already expressed a desire to dissolve ExCo/PC;
- Current committees are not seen to add value to ExCo;
- Potential for continued duplication of discussion between committees and full ExCo.

Option 2:

Dissolve ExCo/PC and retain ExCo/FC as an “Accountability Committee,” with expanded mandate to include both governance and finance issues. Establish ad hoc groups as necessary to handle other issues, including programmatic.

- ***The new committee would consist of CGIAR members only and rotation would be synchronized with that of full ExCo (i.e. one-half of membership to rotate every two years following AGM).***
- ***Specific, short term programmatic issues to be delegated to ad hoc groups, as necessary.***

Advantages:

- Increases efficiency of ExCo;
- Minimizes conflict of interest (i.e. “members only” discussion of governance and finance issues);
- With proper appointments, utilizes specialization/expertise of subcommittee members to examine issues in depth (if necessary, with support from experts) and provide more detailed analysis to ExCo;
- Allows sensitive issues to be discussed by a smaller group.

Disadvantages:

- Possible duplication and overlapping discussions (and addition of another layer);
- Potentially confusing and/or unclear subcommittee mandate (all ExCo issues have a governance and finance dimension!).

Option 3:

Dissolve both the ExCo/FC and ExCo/PC. The CGIAR Secretariat would continue to analyze ExCo decision items and present to ExCo fuller background analysis and draft recommendation(s) for its consideration. Ad hoc groups would be established to handle finance, programmatic and other issues as needed; with the CGIAR Secretariat providing the necessary support to ad hoc groups.

Advantages:

- Full ExCo stays informed and engaged on all issues before the CGIAR;
- All or part of the time devoted to subcommittee meetings could be added to the ExCo timetable;
- Ad hoc groups provide in depth analysis and focus as needed;
- Sensitive matters could still be handled by smaller groups;
- Prior analysis by the CGIAR Secretariat can increase efficiency and facilitate decision making by ExCo

Disadvantages:

- May increase duration of ExCo meetings;
- Creation of ad hoc groups may increase transaction costs.

Conclusion

ExCo's experience to date suggests that discussion of some items in subcommittee meetings is more efficient than a discussion undertaken by the entire group. For example, discussion of EPMRs by the two committees appeared to work well as the committees went into greater detail on questions than the entire ExCo. This shortened the time required to handle the item at the ExCo meeting. However, discussion of other items by the committees did not appear to significantly reduce the workload of ExCo, because the items were fully discussed a second time in the meeting of the whole. In addition, the committees never met with their full membership because the committee members who were not on ExCo rarely attended. This vacuum led to inclusion of all observers in committee discussions, with both positive and negative consequences. For these reasons, ExCo has had mixed success with the use of committees. Several issues must be addressed in order to ensure the success of any future subcommittees and/or ad hoc groups.

The few comments received from members suggest that the majority is in favor of Option 2 above: to dissolve the ExCo/PC and retain a committee to handle matters of finance and governance; programmatic and other issues would be handled by ad hoc groups. If this is the direction ExCo and the CGIAR would like to move towards, the TOR of the current ExCo/FC would need to be redrawn to delineate a clear mandate for the new committee.

On the other hand, Option 3 also has significant advantages and should not be dismissed quickly. This option allows use of ad hoc committees or task-oriented working groups to facilitate the work of ExCo, instead of creating a more permanent structure in the form of a standing committee. It offers a more flexible arrangement, which could be adjusted as circumstances dictate. As ExCo is not a large committee (slightly larger than a typical Center board), handling all matters by the committee of the whole is not difficult, especially when coupled with strong backstopping from the CGIAR Secretariat.

Whether it uses standing committees or not, ExCo, as a committee of the whole, remains accountable to the entire CGIAR membership and, therefore, will need to be directly involved in firming up recommendations on all issues before the committee—whether or not these were previously discussed by a subcommittee. While the comments received from ExCo members indicate a preference for an arrangement as described in Option 2, the actual experience to date with ExCo committees suggests that Option 3 is equally attractive. If Option 2 is the preferred alternative, the subcommittee to be formed should be built from scratch, with the realities and demands of today’s CGIAR and lessons learned from ExCo’s own experience—not as a replicate of an older CGIAR committee, such as the Oversight Committee—thus, the suggestion to give it a new name (“Accountability Committee”).

Functions of the CGIAR Executive Council (ExCo)²

ExCo will be responsible for the following functions:

Goal setting and planning:

- coordination and oversight of the CGIAR-wide strategic and operational planning processes as directed by the Group;
- recommendations to the Group on the System's strategic and operational plans and the selection of Challenge Programs, drawing on inputs and advice from the Science Council and other stakeholders; deciding on planning grants to assist in the preparation of CPs;
- recommendations to the Group concerning policies and decisions on resource mobilization and allocation plans;
- recommendations to the Group on medium term plans and annual financing plans for the System and its advisory and support units;
- requests to the Science Council (SC) for scientific advice on programmatic and other Systemwide strategic issues.

Monitoring implementation:

- monitoring administrative actions arising out of the decisions of the Group, including those pertaining to resource mobilization and allocation;
- monitoring and reporting to the Group on the progress, quality and effectiveness of Challenge Programs, with advice from the SC.

Evaluation:

- oversight of evaluation activities on behalf of the Group, with support from the Science Council and the Secretariats;
- recommendations to the Group on actions to be taken in the light of evaluations of the performance and impact of the Centers and Challenge Programs.

Self Governance:

- recommendations to the Group concerning key appointments to Systemwide posts (e.g., Science Council and SPIA Chairs and members, CGIAR-nominees on Center boards);
- oversight of the work programs and performance of advisory and support units;
- advice and counsel to the Group on all other matters of Systemwide governance.

² *Integrated Proposal for Reform*, Attachment 1, January 23, 2002.

Matrix of Responsibilities

Product	Timing	Stakeholders	CGIAR	Executive Council	Science Council	System Office	Centers and Challenge Programs
Planning Context	5 Years	Collaborate	Approval	Oversight	Prepare	Facilitate	Collaborate
Planning Guidance	3 – 5 years	Collaborate	Approval	Oversight	Collaborate	Prepare	Collaborate
Medium Term Plans and Project Portfolio³	Rolling 3-year plan reviewed annually	Collaborate	Approval	Oversight	Review of Science	Consolidate	Prepare
Annual Operating Plan						Consolidate	Prepare and Approve
Annual Financing Plans	October		Approval	Oversight		Consolidate	Prepare
Evaluation & Impact Assessment	Periodic	Collaborate	Decision	Oversight, follow-up	Commission programmatic jointly with System Office	Commission management jointly with Science Council	Collaborate
Annual Ex-post Report	April			Oversight		Consolidate	Prepare

³ Simplified as proposed by the CGIAR Charter Drafting Committee at its meeting on August 24, 2004.

ExCo Comments on ExCo Committee Reorganization

Rockefeller Foundation (30 June 2004)

- Agree with the dissolution of the ExCo/PC and retention of the ExCo/FC.
- Rather than forming ad hoc subcommittees to consider programmatic issues as they arise, all programmatic issues would be best handled by a committee of the whole.

Private Sector Committee (1 July 2004)

- The work of the ExCo/PC can be partly fulfilled by the SC and ad hoc subcommittees could look at specific issues that require greater scrutiny.
- On the ExCo/FC, it is not clear that it needs to continue since it is also addressing all the issues again in ExCo.
- One really needs to define very clearly what will be done by the ExCo Governance and Finance Committee not to be duplicating work.

CDC (14 July 2004)

- Given the creation of the Science Council (SC), the existence and role of the ExCo/PC becomes redundant and unnecessary. It should therefore be dissolved.
- The mandate of the ExCo/FC could be expanded to include governance and finance.

FAO (28 July 2004)

- The ExCo/PC may have carried over functions of the former Oversight Committee that are now performed by the SC. It could thus be phased out.
- The Science Council, rather than ad hoc groups, would be the right body to address programmatic issues of longer term, Systemwide relevance as the SC can guarantee the necessary continuity and institutional memory when dealing with evolving CGIAR programs.
- In the case of specific, short term issues needing ExCo guidance, such as specific programmatic matters arising in the context of CPs or EPMRs, ad hoc groups formed would appear useful to provide the required advice to ExCo.
- There is a continued need for an ExCo/FC, with enlarged responsibilities for governance matters.

U.S.A. (30 July 2004)

- The ExCo/Program Committee was asked to do things for which it is poorly constituted and equipped, instead of some things which an ExCo committee concerned with program might usefully do.
- The System should consider the two effective committees that functioned during the 1990s—Finance and Oversight. These two committees occasionally met in

joint session, chaired by the CGIAR chair, and termed the CGIAR Steering Committee—basically the forerunner of ExCo. These committees functioned exceptionally well because they had clear remits that were consistent with their make-up. They also provided important loci for generating and cultivating leadership among CGIAR members.

- The Finance Committee role was presumably preserved in the ExCo Finance Committee, the main difference being that there appears to have been relatively little discussion or collective recommendation on Bank resource allocation decisions in the new committee.
- The Finance Committee has an important role in overseeing the overall state of the CGIAR's finances, and in engaging members in a collective way to ensure that responsibility for the System's financial health is well understood and shared.
- The ExCo Program Committee should recast its responsibilities (and perhaps change its name) in the model of the [former] Oversight Committee. Presumably the roles of the Oversight Committee in the areas of good governance and due diligence were to be assumed by ExCo as a whole, but this does not work in practice.
- The matters handled by the Oversight Committee cannot be managed by a group of 20—what is needed is a small committee of perhaps 7 members, with a chair who is a leader in the System and not tied to System bodies.
- A renewed Oversight Committee or Governance Committee would make the System stronger and greatly facilitate ExCo in its work.
- Getting the committee structure right is vitally important to the essential task of generating ownership and leadership among CGIAR members.