

Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research

Alignment Forum

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Summary Record of Proceedings



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Acronyms

AE	Alliance Executive
AGM	Annual General Meeting
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIAT	Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical
CIMMYT	Centro Internacional de Mejoramiento de Maiz y Trigo
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CP	CGIAR Challenge Program
EPMR	External Program and Management Review
ESA	East and Southern Africa
ExCo	CGIAR Executive Council
FAAP	Framework for African Agricultural Productivity
FARA	Forum on Agricultural Research for Africa
ICARDA	International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas
ICRAF	World Agroforestry Center
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IITA	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
INIA	National Institute for Agricultural and Food Research and Technology of the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
IWMI	International Water Management Institute
MTP	Medium-Term Plan
NARS	National Agricultural Research System
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
PM	Performance Measurement
SC	Science Council
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SP	System Priorities of the CGIAR
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
WARDA	West Africa Rice Development Association
WCA	West and Central Africa
WHO	World Health Organization

Session 1. Context Setting

CGIAR Chair Kathy Sierra welcomed participants and gave a brief overview and objectives of the Alignment Forum, including the AGM06 decision to hold the Forum prior to ExCo12. She presented what she considered a successful outcome, namely, for the CGIAR to build on existing experiences and take stock of where we are, but perhaps move at faster pace. The outcome of the deliberations would be taken to ExCo12 and concrete plans developed for future.

She highlighted the importance of governance in the System. For example, she asked if CGIAR needed 200 board members for a \$500 million program. The CGIAR must ask itself if this is the right governance model, or should there be smaller boards and a tighter governance structure. Is the speed of change in the System correct? Or would a revolutionary approach be more appropriate? The role of ExCo is another issue that needs to be considered. Does it need to be more executive in nature with regard to decision making?

She raised the question of the need for a visioning exercise, and considered the possibility of a small group of ExCo members being asked to focus on these issues and come up with options to take the process forward. Funds would also be needed for additional alignment activities. Other donors are already providing funds and the World Bank is willing to contribute \$5 million to move alignment forward.

Introducing the agenda for the Forum, she noted that it would be good to begin with some examples of external perspectives, before shifting to the CGIAR, and to also understand the lessons that have been learned from our own past, followed by a role playing exercise looking at the arguments for revolutionary and evolutionary approaches to alignment. The concluding session would give a summation of key messages and explore ideas on the next steps.

Session 2. Food for Thought: An External Perspective

Science Council Chair Rudy Rabbinge moderated the session and opened it by noting the importance of positioning the CGIAR properly.

Luke Aspinall (from *Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria*) gave a brief background of the Global Fund and described its governance structure. The Global Fund channels grants to local partners in five regions. The Fund is results focused, and sets goals with indicators to measure the effectiveness of grants.

The governance model of the Global Fund includes a board that contains a double voting block (donor block and implementing block) with 10 members in each block. A 7/10 majority from each block is required for decisions to be reached. The board is supported by a secretariat and four board committees. There is also a technical review panel that advises on projects. A partnership forum is held every two years which gathers a broad

range of stakeholders and invites participants to offer feedback on the Global Fund model. Oversight is also provided by a quasi-independent technical evaluation reference group.

Some of the main governance issues faced by the Fund include:

- Reaching consensus between the voting blocks is difficult
- Appointment and rotation of board members are decided internally by each constituency; the secretariat has no say
- Achieving appropriate “buy in” at the committee level
- Board micromanagement of the secretariat
- Allocation of donor seats on the board
- Dual governance with WHO—lack of board autonomy

Tom Remington (from *Catholic Relief Services*) highlighted some similarities between Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and CGIAR. CRS is also implementing a \$500 million program, and is governed by a strong board made up of 14 members of the clergy (bishops and monsignor) and 8 lay persons (non-members of the clergy).

T. Remington highlighted the following points from his perspective:

1. Trust—CGIAR has challenge of trust from both donors and from clients/CSOs.
2. Scalability—The concept comes from the computer world and is related to a network where there are a number of users that can be scaled up to ten times the original number.
3. Service provision—Researchers often think that they are not service providers. If one embraces research for development, then one should also embrace the business model of development.
4. Consensus—The problem is one of lack of consensus building. The mandate is large and agreed upon, but how to do it is an issue.

Discussion:

Some of the key points raised by participants were as follows:

- On the question of which part of the Global Fund governance model could use modification/ improvement, L. Aspinall responded that appointment and active engagement of board members is a challenge, and the secretariat is considering formulation of a set of best practice guidelines to enhance the effectiveness of the board.
- On donors’ representation in Global Fund board, L. Aspinall pointed out that all donors are represented in some way by either holding a seat or being represented by a member of a particular constituency á la ExCo. Each constituency can bring a delegation of up to 10 members to board meetings.
- In comparing the role of the Global Fund with that of WHO, L. Aspinall noted that the Global Fund is like a bank in that it raises and disburses funds. WHO can bid for and receive funds to implement projects. He clarified that the Fund is not an implementing agency and does not have in-country staff.
- There was also a question on whether the partnership forum (for Global Fund) and working through partners (CRS) works effectively. T. Remington noted

- that most CSOs are very small and there are networks among them; there is room for dialogue but achieving consensus needs to be done in a strategic fashion in order to be effective.
- T. Remington noted that the perceived lack of trust is at the institutional level. The challenge is to transfer the trust at the individual level to the institutional level. For example, he noted that CRS has relationships with most CGIAR Centers but there are no MOUs.

Session 3. CGIAR Initiatives: Learning from Within

Katharina Jenny (SDC, Switzerland) opened and served as moderator of the session. Namita Datta (CGIAR Secretariat) presented an overview of the visioning exercises and alignment initiatives in the CGIAR in the recent past. She highlighted the following exercises in her presentation:

- The “Renewal of the CGIAR” Meeting: Lucerne Declaration, 1995
- The Third System Review (TSR) of the CGIAR, 1998
- Change Design and Management Team (CDMT) Report, 2001
- World Bank/OED Meta-Evaluation Report, 2003
- CGIAR Sub-Saharan Africa Task Force Report, 2005

She pointed out the key recommendations coming out of the above, most of which became the basis of the reform program that the CGIAR launched in 2001.

She also highlighted some recent alignment initiatives at the System level, e.g. programmatic alignment with the CGIAR-approved System Priorities, as well as mechanism for coordinated funding by CGIAR Members of those priorities (Member Coordination Forum at AGM06). A number of alignment initiatives among Centers were highlighted.

N. Datta drew the following as lessons learned from the visioning exercises and alignment initiatives:

- CGIAR has revisited the issue of its structure and strategy a number of times in the past
- Visioning Exercises which were backed by Member commitment had more impact than others;
- Evolutionary approach to effect changes has been preferred.
- Incentives are needed to keep the momentum in alignment initiatives.

Discussion:

The discussion began with brief statements from the following members of the discussion panel: Emile Frison (AE), Steve Hall (WorldFish), Peter Hartmann (IITA), Monty Jones (FARA), Wolfgang Kasten (GTZ, Germany), and Franklin Moore (USAID). An open discussion involving other Alignment Forum participants then ensued. Key points made were as follows:

- The Forum provides an opportunity for frank and direct discussion on alignment and related issues.
- One lesson that emerges from history is that the CGIAR does not really have decision making capacity.
- It is important to be more inclusive in engaging stakeholders in the dialogue to ensure that all components of the System are going in the same direction.
- It was noted that the visioning exercises have focused more on structure rather than on content.
- Alliance of CGIAR Centers has decided to be more proactive in its participation in the change process. Attention was invited to an Alliance paper that suggests models or options for structural change in the CGIAR.
- Alignment is being pursued not necessarily because of funding issues but because it makes sense from effectiveness and efficiency considerations. Alignment among Centers requires commitment from senior management.
- Alignment efforts should focus on a level below that of mergers, e.g. aligned virtual libraries, procurement services, HR, research methods, etc.
- Alignment reduces transaction costs and also addresses donor constraints.
- There is a need to address governance at Center level, i.e. the efficiency of Boards which look at Centers, not the System.
- Partners constitute a critical pillar that is missing in the Alliance paper.
- A major issue from SSA standpoint is alignment of CGIAR priorities with CAADP of NEPAD and FAAP developed by FARA. CGIAR needs to be better coordinated/aligned for increased impact in SSA.

Session 4. Revolutionizing the Evolution

Jean Lebel (IDRC), the session moderator, opened the session by inviting the two speakers – Denis Despreaux (France) and Ayman Abou Hadid (Egypt) – to share their perspectives on how to proceed with alignment in the CGIAR.

Denis Despreaux (France) shared a number of arguments for a revolutionary approach by highlighting that:

- Considerations on development have completely changed during the last decades;
- National levels are not as relevant anymore;
- Science has been rapidly changing;
- Scientific community's interest in research for development is decreasing;
- The functioning of research is changing and partnerships are necessary to maintain excellence;
- Linking of research with higher education is crucial.

Ayman Abou Hadid (Egypt) shared his views on how an evolutionary approach to alignment would be most adequate by pointing out the following:

- Evolution builds on existing capacity, making changes more sustainable;
- The importance of partnership with developing countries (i.e. NARS) and thereby strengthening their contribution;

- The importance of CGIAR's contribution to strengthening research capacity in developing countries;
- That GFAR can play a role in coordinating interregional relationships;
- The absence of strong voice from the south within the CGIAR was noticed and needs to be addressed.

Discussion:

- Both statements work with the same premises about the CGIAR mission;
- A better understanding of the institutional interfaces between different partners and stakeholders to help promote strong partnerships is needed;
- Strategic partnerships need to be carefully developed;
- There is a need to better understand stakeholder perceptions;
- There is risk of losing political credibility if the evolutionary process is too slow;
- Improving efficiency is an important consideration in the alignment efforts;
- Quick wins need to be made with tangible advances of the System, such as the performance measurement system.

In his summation, Jean Lebel pointed out that what is needed is a clear timeline for implementing change with quick and tangible wins. The CGIAR Stakeholder Perception Survey conducted in 2006 as part of the CGIAR PM System should be revisited as it can serve as a critical entry point to better understand some of the required changes.

Session 5. Moving Ahead

Kathy Sierra summarized the main messages from the Alignment Forum as follows:

- There are rapid changes in the CGIAR's external environment, which necessitate careful analysis of opportunities and threats, especially the volatility of funding.
- There is a need to drive a change of corporate culture and system governance, especially building on trust.
- It is important to harness the energy of the Centers, which is reflected in the Alliance paper.
- CGIAR should continue to focus on efficiency, good governance, and increased accountability.
- Collaboration with partners should be strengthened.

In terms of the next steps, the CGIAR could initiate a robust facilitated change management process, to ensure that we pick up pace and ask the difficult questions.