



AGM06 Business Meeting Member Coordination Forum

Harmonizing Evaluation Activities in the CGIAR

A discussion note

**Prepared by the CGIAR Secretariat¹
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Suggested Questions for Discussion

- Do Members consider that there is a need to harmonize evaluation requirements and activities in the CGIAR?
- Does the existing CGIAR evaluation framework satisfy your agency's requirements?
- What actions do Members suggest for tackling these issues?

Introduction

With the signing of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005, the donor community has embarked on a process aimed at harmonizing the design, management and delivery of aid. This process is also leading to a reconsideration of the way donors conceive and implement evaluation activities. Evaluation responds to essential needs of learning and accountability, and is therefore essential to improving the performance of development assistance. However, evaluations also generate costs, particularly in terms of the burden they impose on programs and organizations.

As part of their general shift away from project-based interventions towards more program funding, donors have started considering ways to streamline their evaluation requirements. Within the OECD/DAC there is broad agreement on the benefits of avoiding separate evaluative exercises by conducting joint evaluations.² In the same vein, rather than continuing with individual evaluations of the projects and activities financed through their multilateral commitments, bilateral donors have started promoting the use of the evaluation systems and products of the multilateral

¹ This note was drafted by Andrea Liverani, CGIAR Secretariat, in collaboration with the CGIAR Secretariat team.

² OECD/DAC (2000) *Effective Practices in Conducting Joint Multi Donor Evaluations* Evaluation and Aid Effectiveness Series, N. 4, Paris; OECD (2005) *Joint Evaluations: Recent Experiences, Lessons Learned and Options for the Future* DAC Evaluation Network Working Paper, Paris; OECD (2006) *Guidance for Managing Joint Evaluations* DAC Evaluation Series, Paris

agencies and global programs responsible for implementing these activities, as a way of minimizing the overall cost of their accountability requirements.³

The CGIAR Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

The CGIAR's M&E framework seeks to respond to both members' accountability needs and the system's continuing need for internal learning. It comprehensively addresses the system's different elements through a range of specific tools, including (i) external reviews and MTPs of Centers and Challenge Programs; (ii) thematic cross-cutting reviews (Stripe Reviews); (iii) institutional reviews of system components, such as the recent System Office review; (iv) reviews of inter-center programs such as SWEPS; and (v) CGIAR System Reviews, which assess the CGIAR's overall performance.⁴ The introduction of the Performance Measurement system - a building block of the CGIAR reform process - was specifically aimed at checking and enhancing the overall results orientation of the CGIAR on a yearly basis. The results of these activities are routinely shared with the Consultative Group.

In addition to the CGIAR's own M&E framework, Members regularly conduct individual evaluations of specific components of the system in which they have a direct stake. These can range from evaluations of single projects carried out by one CGIAR Center to reviews of an entire Challenge Program. Evidence shows that between 2000 and 2005, some Centers have been subject to up to 21 such Member commissioned reviews. Despite their often limited target (e.g. a single project) these reviews add to the overall reporting requirements that Centers and Challenge Programs have to respond to. This situation begs the question of whether evaluation activities at system level – including Members' individual reviews - can be harmonized, in order to make sure that their benefits exceed the costs. This issue is likely to become more relevant as the System moves towards increased harmonization.

Some Options

Some of the options available to start addressing these issues include:

- (a) Encouraging the CGIAR to identify opportunities for streamlining and further improving its Evaluation framework, including the development of a comprehensive system-wide Evaluation policy;
- (b) To address their own accountability needs, Members commit to utilizing – to the maximum extent possible – the CGIAR M&E framework, based on a confirmation of its suitability;
- (c) In situations where the CGIAR M&E framework does not suffice, Members endeavor to explore joint evaluation arrangements with other Members.

³ DAC Evaluation Network (2005) *A New Approach to Assessing Multilateral Organizations' Evaluation Performance*, June ; IEG (2006) *Draft Principles and Standards for the Evaluation of Global and Regional Partnership Programs* (GRPPs). Paper presented at the Fifth Meeting of the OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation November 16-17, 2006

⁴ CGIAR SC Secretariat (2005) *Monitoring and Evaluation System for the CGIAR Centers*