

Executive summary

The first workshop organised by the Alliance in 2009 as part of the change process focused on the development of the new Strategy and Results Framework (SRF) and the mega-programmes (MPs) within it. It was attended by the DDG-Research from the 15 centres, three Challenge Program leaders, external participants from collaborating institutions in the South and in the North, some DGs and members of the CPT.

The objectives of the workshop were to clarify: (i) key concepts for developing the SRF and the MPs and (ii) the process which the Alliance will use to design the SRF and the MP by November 2009 in a transparent, consultative and effective manner. Ownership of the process, clarity among the key elements and a clear sense of what next steps are needed were the expected outputs. The Alliance consortium planning team (CPT) has been charged by the full Alliance to design a process for creating the Consortium and for designing the SRF and the MP. The outputs from this workshop will thus be inputs into the CPT's decisions. The intent is to have a draft SRF and portfolio of MPs to discuss with all participants in the Global Conference on Agricultural Research organised by GFAR in February 2010.

Kathy Sierra (via audio) offered some *overall principles* for this process:

- It is critical to have our partners with us in this, to open up and look to the future. We need to build something that will inspire scientists and donors, focuses on results and the big challenges of the day.
- We want to secure more funding for a strong, results-oriented science. For this we need to have the right structure and management. The Alliance has the opportunity to keep structure and management light so that less efficient parts in the current system can be deconstructed
- As we look to the future we aren't starting from scratch but neither should we be constrained by the work we do today.

A session on *drawing lessons* from our past and on-going collective action mechanisms (the challenge programmes and the system wide and ecoregional programmes) yielded the following insights:

- partnerships have clearly added value to our agenda, viz., more integrative science and approaches, greater development impact and relevance and building of social capital (capacity building)
- we are not very good at learning from the past and need to put in place more effective learning systems
- partnerships can be rent seeking or innovative; appropriate incentives are needed to avoid the rent seeking type
- Complexity increases with size if we have not put in place the appropriate rules and mechanisms. Transaction costs are a result of poor design.
- Collective action works when there are clear and enforceable agreements that are linked to real consequences to all parties

- There has been a degree of self interest in our past collective undertakings and this has caused many of the problems; we have to put more genuine effort on strengthening the collective mind set.

Participants' aspirations for the future Consortium showed that extremely high accomplishments are expected from the reform (e.g., winning Nobel Prizes); this emphasised the urgency and importance of the changes discussed in this workshop.

Clarification of 'impact pathways': the concept of impact pathways and the appropriate level at which such pathways need to be designed were discussed by six working groups, each working on one of the strategic objective (food for people, environment for people, policy for people). The main conclusions reached were:

- pathways are not linear but complex and 'very messy'
- partners have to be involved in their construction
- research plays a relatively small role within a pathway, so that leveraging research with the other dimensions of the pathway is essential
- the three strategic objectives led to pathways that were very comparable; food, environment and policy are interrelated along a given pathway so the MPs will have to be linked to more than one strategic objective

Clarification of the concept of a portfolio of MP and of MP: the plenary and working group discussions succeeded in clarifying a set of principles and criteria for both the Consortium level portfolio of MPs and for each MP. At the level of the portfolio, the consensus was that

- The *portfolio* addresses key development challenges facing the poor where the CGIAR has a comparative advantage. It shows the quantifiable outcomes and ultimate impacts which the Consortium can deliver by being co-accountable for outcomes (with its partners) and having co-responsibility for impacts (with a larger range of partners)
- it constitutes almost the entire agenda of the Consortium; activities outside of the portfolio are the new discovery work (around 10% of activities at Consortium level) and activities that only concern one centre and take place outside of any MP (again around 10% at the Consortium level). Work on emergency issues will be part of the MPs and their delivery mechanisms.
- There are research 'functions' (e.g. labs, GIS, foresight studies) that would best be provided through shared facilities/platforms or outsourcing, to support all the MPs. These functions will be analysed as part of the consultancy on shared services and functions for which the Alliance is developing TORs.
- The MP portfolio constitutes a coherent agenda at the system level, integrating food, environment and policy issues in relation to the MDGs; each MP is designed as part of the portfolio, with explicit linkages with other MPs, not in isolation of the other MPs. Gender issues and capacity building as also fully integrated in the portfolio.
- The portfolio reflects a different way to do business (a behavioural change) with strategic partnerships, integration of activities and a clear focus on results
- The full portfolio contains less than 10 MPs.

- A transition period from the current system to the time when all MPs are functional will take up to 3 years and has to be carefully managed

A consensus was also reached about the *principles a MP must fulfil*.

- Each MP addresses a big development/environmental challenge. It demonstrates how it contributes to quantified outcomes and impacts and provides measurable indicators of progress toward impact. Results and impacts are compelling. The roles and comparative advantages of the Consortium and its partners are clearly spelled out.
- It encompasses a range of strategic partnerships, identified on the basis of needs to deliver scientific results and impacts, given the respective comparative advantage of the Consortium and its partners
- Partners are fully engaged in the design of an MP, from the very beginning. There is alignment between the objectives of a MP and regional and national priorities. The design of an MP is driven by stakeholders' needs and the needs of science
- Activities within a MP are coherent and integrated. There are no redundancies as the work is planned, implemented and monitored in an integrated manner.
- An MP has a clear impact pathway; it is accountable, with all partners, for results and outcomes and responsible, with a range of other actors, for the delivery systems leading to impacts.
- Realism in what the CGIAR and its partners can accomplish vis-à-vis big development/environmental challenges must be instilled in the compelling quantifiable measures of success the MP develops.
- An MP has a planning time horizon of about 10 years, with milestones along the way. External peer evaluations determine whether the MP should amend/continue/close its activities
- An MP has a simple and effective management mechanism; it is not a new structure/entity; at the Consortium level, it does not result in a net increase in bureaucracy
- An MP is implemented by integrated teams of scientists and partners; its management structure needs to be analysed by the Boston Consulting Group, as part of the Consortium creation, as the Consortium is accountable for the governance and coordination of the MPs
- The roles and functions of the centres vis-à-vis the MPs have to be clarified.

A discussion on *priority setting* among big development/environmental challenges and among potential MPs within the portfolio clarified that different criteria are relevant at different levels. The choice of the development/environmental challenges on which the system must work should be done on the basis of the report from Working Group one in the change process and of the paper on development challenges which the Alliance provided as an input to Working Group 1. The choice of MPs within the Consortium portfolio could be done on the basis of measurable criteria such as:

- size of potential impacts, for instance: number of poor, impact on gender issues, impact on the environment
- time frame to impact

- Comparative/collaborative advantage and alternate suppliers
- Feasibility/state of science to contribute and the probability of success
- Priorities of development partners and donors
- Coherence with the SRF and the other MPs in the portfolio

There are trade offs among the different impacts of a MP (e.g., impact on productivity and on the environment or on the poor) and that there are trade offs among criteria (e.g., time frame to impact and state of science). The analysis leading to prioritisation will thus need to assess these trade offs. Because partners' perspectives and inputs are critical, the regional consultations GFAR is organising in 2009 will be key. There are many documents (from the CGIAR and regional partners), processes (e.g., regional consultations) and tools (e.g., modelling) that need to be harnessed to effectively design a portfolio of MPs in a transparent manner.

The brainstorming session on *potential portfolios of MPs* was a first attempt at developing concrete propositions for portfolios. The intent was to produce a few realistic but potential portfolios to use as a basis for further discussions and 'testing', both within the Alliance and with partners and donors. This 'testing' will also include an analysis of the potential portfolios in terms of the principles and criteria MPs and the portfolio of MPs must fulfil.

Working groups were asked to develop a portfolio of six MPs that would represent the Consortium portfolio within 5 years. Four working groups proposed portfolios in which the MPs addressed a big development/environmental challenge. There were a number of common themes across the four portfolios thus presented. Portfolio A is an example of the type of portfolios the four working groups produced.

Portfolio A

- 1. Ensuring the availability of agricultural genetic assets for future generations***
- 2. Mitigating against and adapting agricultural systems to climate change***
- 3. Sustainable diversification and intensification of agricultural systems to improve productivity and profitability for poor farmers***
- 4. Improving diets and nutrition of the world's poor***
- 5. Improving rural livelihoods by ensuring the long term variability and resilience of agricultural systems***
- 6. Improving water use throughout agricultural systems***

Variations across the four working groups included whether climate change, gender and genomic resources and tools should be cross-cutting, because of their very importance, or should constitute a separate MP. Each MP within such a portfolio would have different regional dimensions, reflecting socio-economic, physical and environmental differences across regions. Other cross-cutting issues included capacity development, equity, policy and markets.

Two working groups proposed portfolios in which MPs are linked to a sector rather than a challenge. Each proposed portfolio involved 8 instead of 6 MPs. Common to both proposals were a set of MPs dealing with a commodity chain (rice, wheat, maize,

roots and tubers, livestock, dry land crops). One group proposed in addition four thematic MPs whereas the other proposed additional sectoral MPs, thus:

Portfolio B

- 1. Rice-wheat based systems*
- 2. Maize-based systems*
- 3. Roots and tubers based system*
- 4. Dryland crops (cereals and legumes)/rangeland*
- 5. Forest and trees*
- 6. Livestock*
- 7. Fisheries and aquaculture*
- 8. Better use of water*

Portfolio C

- 1. Increasing and sustaining global rice productivity to benefit the poor*
- 2. Increasing and sustaining global wheat productivity to benefit the poor*
- 3. Increasing and sustaining global maize productivity to benefit the poor*
- 4. Increasing and sustaining global roots and tubers productivity to benefit the poor*
- 5. Better nutrition and income generation through enhanced animal production*
- 6. Sustaining water resources and eco-system services in natural and agricultural systems*
- 7. Resilient dry land systems*
- 8. Policies, institutions and people for agricultural development for SSA*

Portfolios B and C were presented as reflecting vertical integration, a simpler mode of organising research by comparison with today and a similar organisation as NARS and the private sector.

In the last session of the workshop the *next steps* leading to the design of a process for developing the SRF and the MPs were discussed.

- Focus and scope of MPs: Portfolio A, with thematic MPs directly linked to challenges, describes what the Consortium does and portfolios B and C, with sectoral MPs, describe how the work is done. Portfolio A will bring about greater vertical integration across the centres; it meets development aspirations, and demonstrates a meaningful reform of the research agenda in the System. Portfolios B and C have a simpler organisation (a Centre leads each MP according to its comparative advantage); they may not generate more integration across centres activities but they would be relatively easy to manage especially during the transition period. Given the accepted principle that MPs have to be integrative and that their objectives must link with development challenges, it was agreed that units of work might be done in a sectoral way within a larger results framework that would help pull together the activities.

- Definition of the MP concept and preparation of two ‘mock ups’ of MPs: A timeline was proposed for finalizing the concept of a MP and of a portfolio, and for developing two contrasting ‘mock ups’ of MPs in time for June ExCo.
- Design of the SRF and draft portfolio of MPs with prioritization criteria: The SRF will identify key development objectives (expanding on the document of WG1 in the Change Process and the Alliance document on Development Challenges) and will quantify realistic development ‘targets’. Prioritization among MPs will have to be done initially on the basis of qualitative assessments (high level strategy) whereas prioritization of activities/sub-programmes within the MPs will be done on a more quantitative and analytical basis (e.g. following a process similar to the IFPRI approach to regional targeting). The first draft SRF and the first draft portfolio will probably not include many quantitative analyses, given the timeframe available. An iterative process will be used to hone in the different elements of the SRF and of the draft portfolio.
- Consultation and communication process: A credible and effective consultation process is needed which builds upon and is broader than the regional consultations GFAR is organizing. Consultations with key stakeholders are critical. A communication plan is also needed that will keep people informed and engaged and will lay the ground for consultations and outreach.

The CPT who has the charge of designing an overall process for the SRF and MPs will use all the outputs from this workshop to develop specific terms of reference for the different work streams and select the individuals responsible to implement the terms of reference. The process thus designed by the CPT will be communicated widely.