

The Consortium Design Moves Forward – Report from the Alliance of CGIAR Centers Executive and Centre Board Chairs Meeting in Rome

The Alliance of CGIAR Centers achieved an important milestone at its recent meeting held 11-13 May at Bioversity International headquarters in Rome where Alliance leadership (Centre Board Chairs and Centre Directors General) reached consensus on a workable model for the Consortium constitution and the process for developing the Strategy and Results Framework (SRF) and Mega Programs. In this, our third update to stakeholders, we are pleased to provide more information (and links to documentation) on these outcomes, other items discussed as well as the Report on Gender Integration in the CGIAR.

At its May meeting the Alliance examined and commented upon all aspects of the draft constitution, using a set of key design questions previously discussed with stakeholders around such topics as decision making, fund allocation, Consortium Office financing, the Consortium's role in organizational redesign and the Consortium Board. Overall the draft constitution reflects unanimous agreement on a number of key Consortium design issues. The draft Constitution (attached) is now submitted to ExCo as part of our consultations on the creation of the Consortium.

The consensus reached is with the acknowledgement that the Centre Boards have not yet approved the draft constitution and will be reviewing this at subsequent meetings. The Boards will consider the Constitution as part of a larger package of information that will also include the Strategy and Results Framework, the Mega Programs, a full cost benefit analysis of the Consortium organisational model and more information on the donor's commitment to the Fund.

At the Alliance meeting, the progress on the Strategy and Results Framework and the Mega Programs was also reviewed and discussed. The team tasked with developing 'mock ups' of three different types of Mega Programs¹ shared with the Alliance the lessons they had learned from undertaking this activity. In spite of their different topics there were some common conclusions. For example, as the team were designing the 'mock ups' they reported that they had felt a real sense of excitement as it became obvious that the Mega Programs offered real opportunities to improve research effectiveness at the system level. The three examples showed how greater impacts could be achieved through a number of mechanisms provided by Mega Programs – greater integration with partners; alignment of research with development interests, and capacity development, at both the individual and institutional levels. Options for governing and managing Mega Programs had also been analysed by the team and these were discussed by the Alliance. The [paper prepared on lessons learned for ExCo](#) is available (attached).

This Alliance meeting was the first opportunity the Alliance had to debate and provide feedback to the 'Strategy' Team. Following these discussions the 'Strategy' Team provided the Consortium Planning Team with [a document for ExCo](#) (attached) based on the progress report that was presented to the Alliance and describing some of the key thinking of the team on the SRF.

With full agreement on the process underway, the Alliance also decided that there would be more involvement of the Alliance of Deputy Executive in the development process and assistance from the Alliance Office and Consortium Planning Team in the consultation and communication efforts. The analytical quantitative and qualitative work on the SRF and Mega Programs will occur over the May-July period and will be led by the Strategy Team in cooperation with CGIAR Centers and partners. Consultations with partners and stakeholders will take place in the June-August period culminating in a draft for even wider circulation and consultation post August.

¹ The Mega Program 'mock ups' are available for review and comment at <http://alliance.cgxchange.org/mega-programs-mock-ups-feedback>

Soon after the Alliance meeting, the team from IFPRI charged with leading a study and consultative process to develop [a plan for gender integration into the research and outreach work of the CGIAR](#), submitted their report. We share this with our stakeholders as part of this update as it is an exciting piece of work that has revealed that we can learn from the past (there is a wealth of experience with gender research in the CGIAR) in creating a vision of a gender-responsive CGIAR. The study team have identified key elements to move forward on this vision including recommendations for gender-sensitive indicators for selection of Mega Programs and creating accountability within the Strategy and Results Framework; a Global Platform on Gender in Agriculture to support the whole CGIAR system (including national and regional partners) in developing methods, conducting studies, and drawing lessons from comparative experiences, and a proposal for a gender Mega Program which could provide more focused work on gender.

Over the course of their meeting, the Alliance raised and discussed a number of other issues such as: leadership; engaging more proactively with donors on the Fund; simplifying the new system and ensuring that additional costs, layers and bureaucracy are addressed appropriately; managing the transition to the new system; determining how the Centres would contribute in the Mega Program portfolio; leaving space in the research agenda for blue sky research and other R4D activities; and building excitement for the research agenda. The Alliance also reviewed and discussed other elements of the new CGIAR - the Fund, the Independent Science and Partnership Council and the GCARD process.

As Phase 2 (June to December 2009) of developing the Consortium begins, much work remains not only in the further development of the SRF and Mega Programs but also on the nomination and selection of the inaugural consortium Board, design of the Consortium and the Consortium Office, developing a proposal for shared services, evaluating the net cost impact of the new Consortium structure, drawing up an effective transition plan and continuing interaction with other System work streams. Plans are in place to carry this forward. The Alliance will engage more proactively with stakeholders including the donor community. The Alliance will engage with the GCARD process as it unfolds over the coming months. An Alliance-donor engagement will be planned in the third quarter of the year and another full meeting of the Alliance will be held 29-31 October as further input and decision making in preparation for the CGIAR Business meeting in December.

You are welcome to view all the documents noted above on the [Alliance information and communication website](#). This site provides ready access to the information arising, and being generated from, the creation of the Consortium of Centers and development of the Strategy and Results Framework (SRF) and the Mega Programs. Also included in this site is a recent [interview with Kathy Sierra](#) on the CGIAR Change Initiative. The questions Kathy responded to were issues raised by the CGIAR Center Board Chairs as particularly relevant.

Please feel free to direct any questions or comments on the Alliance meeting or any aspect of the Consortium design process and the development of the Strategy and Results Framework and Mega Program to the Chair of the Alliance Executive (S.Hall@cgiar.org) or the Chief Alliance Officer (a.izac@cgiar.org). Ruth Meinzen-Dick at IFPRI (R.Meinzen-Dick@cgiar.org) would be pleased to receive comments and/or feedback on the report of gender integration in the CGIAR.

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