



TMT Journal Update

April 24, 2009

Not "Business as Usual" - from Jonathan Wadsworth

Dear All,

As Steve Hall mentioned in our first Transition Management Team (TMT) Journal Update last week, we are aiming to send more frequent and informal updates. This week it is my turn to give you the latest developments.

This Wednesday (23rd April) the TMT met by telephone and the agenda focused on three items: 1) how we can create a powerful signal that things are not "business as usual"; 2) progress we are making on Communications; and 3) preparation for the informal donor workshop in London next week.

Not "Business as Usual"

All of us on the TMT agree that in the midst of a transition effort, a food crisis, a global economic downturn and financial crises around the world - none of us can afford to continue doing things "business as usual". We discussed opportunities to demonstrate that change is on the horizon. And we realized that if we are asking all of the key actors in the System to shift behavior in some way, then we must be role models ourselves of the change we hope to see across the entire CGIAR System. To solve complex problems that may seem intractable will require a concerted effort and a key starting point is a readiness to shift away from "business as usual".

Some of you may have seen an interview with Trevor Manuel, former Finance Minister of South Africa, in a recent issue of Time Magazine (6th April). When asked how that Nation had been able to solve complex problems that seemed insurmountable he replied - "We all had to give up something". This is a compelling truth for all of us who want to see a new CGIAR doing more and doing better. We will all need to make some compromises for the collective good, and a key starting point is a shift away from "business as usual".

We agreed that two upcoming meetings - the informal donor workshop in London and the ExCo in June in Cali, Colombia - in particular represent excellent opportunities to put these ideas into practice. We explored both visible and subtle ways to show that we want to start conducting our business in a very different way (e.g., moving away from overly formal meetings toward highly interactive and dynamic discussions; by challenging our own assumptions about whether a specific update is needed just because it has always been a standard agenda item at ExCo etc.). We will keep you posted on how this goes - but hope you will be able to see and feel the shift for yourself.

TMT Communication

In the last TMT Update, Steve noted our collective realization that there is a lot more we need to do in the area of communication. We are making progress on this with the support of communications experts from the Alliance, the CGIAR Secretariat, and Centers.

We are working toward ensuring much tighter coordination on communications among the various teams working to implement the transition - we really want to find the right balance to ensure an open flow of information and avoid communication overload. We have also recently put in place a Communications "SWAT" team made up of several Communications experts from various Centers. They have already been incredibly helpful in providing their expertise and advice on messaging and strategy. The network of expert communicators embedded across the system is one of the "best kept secrets" of the CGIAR and we intend to exploit them ruthlessly!

Informal Donor Workshop

In our discussions in preparation for the meeting in London next week, we focused a lot on clarifying what we know, what we do not know, and what concerns and risks we see related to the Consortium, the CGIAR strategy, and the Fund. We also identified questions and concerns which we would like to address with the workshop attendees such as how we collectively ensure a smooth transition to the new Fund such that the Centres will not suffer from continuity/cash flow challenges. In keeping with our commitment to keeping this dialogue open, we will have a live blogger in London.

I hope that I have done this update justice, and very much welcome your feedback and comments on this and other updates on the transition process. At our next TMT meeting, scheduled for 1 May, we will be discussing the key outcomes from the informal donor workshop and preparing for ExCo in June.

With warm regards,

Jonathan Wadsworth
(on behalf of the Transition Management Team)