

## **ExCo Recommendations on Review of CGIAR Partnership Committees<sup>1</sup>**

Review Panel Chair Keith Bezanson presented an overview of the final report of the team. The review team was formed in June 2003 to explore two basic questions: (1) How successful have the Committees been in achieving their mission? and (2) Are there alternative ways in which the CGIAR could achieve the Committees' mission more efficiently?

He noted that the creation of the Private Sector (PSC) and NGO (NGOC) Committees was the result of the Lucerne Ministerial meeting in February 1995, which concluded that the CGIAR should strengthen its partnerships with key stakeholders, such as the NGO and private sector communities.

### *Private Sector Committee*

During the PSC's initial years there was enthusiasm shared by the Committee and the CGIAR to moving the agendas forward. This was followed by disappointment because of what the PSC considered non-responsiveness of the CGIAR System. The PSC expressed frustration that the CGIAR functions as a 'black box' where there is a one-way flow into it, with no response coming out. By the early 2000s meetings had become less frequent. In January 2003, with new membership, a new program was launched with time bound projects in the areas of alliance building, policy dialogue (specifically biotechnology), and communications, which appears promising in terms of achieving concrete results.

A survey conducted by the Panel shows that PSC members consider the Committee's main strength to be having a mechanism to carry on a dialogue with the CGIAR for mutual awareness and benefit. However, the main weaknesses they see are inadequate links with Centers. Past PSC members evaluate the Committee as only 30 percent effective because they believe the CGIAR is only 30 percent effective and there is need for the CGIAR to figure out what it wants from the Committee.

### *NGO Committee*

Similar to the PSC, there was a lot of enthusiasm when the NGOC was created in 1995. There was a large reservoir of NGO goodwill for the System and general support for mainstreaming NGOs into the System. However, there was resistance in some quarters of the System -to working with NGOs. The NGOC produced a paper in 1997 on biotechnology stating that the CGIAR commitment to biotechnology could alienate much of the NGO community, followed by a paper on intellectual property rights (IPR) emphasizing farmers' rights and protection of indigenous and traditional knowledge. This was soon followed by a rise in advocacy on the part of the Committee. By 2000

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from Sixth Meeting of the CGIAR Executive Council (May 10-11, 2004) Summary Record of Proceedings, June 2, 2004.

there was a formal expression of disappointment that its recommendations were not being acted on at the System level. The NGOC announced a freeze of its relationship with the CGIAR in October 2002 at the AGM.

From the NGOC perspective, on the plus side members welcomed a place at the table and saw some gains in moving the CGIAR agenda to focus on poverty reduction, and mainstreaming NRM and ecological research, and improved communications. On the negative side, they concluded the CGIAR is unable or unwilling to make changes necessary to act as a force for poverty reduction, felt the dialogue had proved meaningless and the process had become a means to co-opt NGOs. Bezanson noted that the NGO community is deeply divided and some advocate closure of the CGIAR, but others privately deplore the breakdown in communications and the unilateral freeze.

### *Other Issues*

There is a divergent set of views from the many actors in the System: DGs, Board Chairs, donors, co-sponsors, NARS, etc. Few doubt the importance of linkages represented by the committees, but the experience of both committees is part of a larger systemic problem. There is agreement that new mechanisms are needed to make such linkages effective, but it is unclear what these are. Some believe, especially in terms of the NGOC, that the system is broken. On the relationship with NGOC, all agreed there are serious problems with the engagement that can not be rectified by a few adjustments, rather there is a need for reinvention and innovation. There are divergent views on whether the January 2003 PSC program will produce a concrete, functional base for collaboration.

There is also a strong view that the CGIAR should make a clearer distinction between shareholders and stakeholders. Stakeholders such as NGOC and PSC should not take part in CGIAR decision making.

Other possible lessons from the CGIAR experience with NGOC and PSC include:

- Partnerships come in many forms; know what you want before entering into one.
- Partnerships can be cost-ineffective—too many approaches as ends in themselves.
- Agreements should be time bound with sunset clauses
- Agree on clear milestones, evaluation criteria, and formal exit strategies ex ante.
- Issues of asymmetry and cultural differences should be resolved beforehand.

### *Discussion:*

- The PSC Chair noted that the report has been circulated to PSC members and the PSC will provide a formal reply after it has had an opportunity for discussion. She noted that the PSC remains enthusiastic about collaboration with the CGIAR and welcomes clarity on what is expected from the committee.
- The concept of civil society needs to be seen as much larger than only NGOs and the private sector, but also include other groups such as farmers, indigenous peoples, etc. Globally, there has been a paradigm shift in thinking about civil society, from the initial focus in the early 1990s only on NGOs and private sector

institutions to a much more comprehensive view that exists today. The review has failed to capture this shift.

- The central question is whether partnership committees are the best way to engage with civil society. The CGIAR can not afford to not have such a relationship. However, whether the relationship should exist through the partnership committees or another mechanism, it is imperative to maintain such an engagement.
- The PSC should have a chance to proceed with its current program.
- A relationship and engagement with NGOs was seen as important and should somehow be resurrected. However, the freeze of relationship with NGOC was a unilateral decision and the CGIAR should not beg to continue the partnership.
- Partnerships with both NGOs and the private sector have been successful at the Center level, because they were undertaken with clear agreements with groups that have a common agenda—political with advocacy groups.
- GFAR has a lot of experience with civil society partnerships and could play a role in closing the gap between civil society and the CGIAR.
- The CGIAR Charter should express clearly the CGIAR’s desire to partner with all civil society organizations (CSOs), along the lines suggested in the report

***ExCo Recommendations to the CGIAR:***

*ExCo adopted the following two-pronged approach as a way forward:*

1. *The CGIAR Secretariat should draft a clear statement on the necessity for CGIAR engagement with all components of civil society to be incorporated into the CGIAR Charter. The statement would be sent to ExCo for endorsement before going to the CGIAR for final approval. The Charter would recognize that a range of partnerships are essential for success, and highlight the widespread collaboration at the Center level, missing at the System level.*
2. *Regarding the recommendations of the review:*
  - *On PSC, adopt recommendation 8, “market testing” for 2-4 years.*
  - *On NGOC, send message on desire to re-establish dialogue. At the same time, strengthen ongoing initiatives with CSOs, such as innovation marketplace, SC initiatives, e-consultation on CGIAR-CSO linkage as pre-AGM activity, etc.*
  - *Develop an inventory of partnerships, study lessons learned and prepare a guide of best practices at the Center and System levels.*
  - *Draw from recommendation 3 to focus on the kinds of partnerships desired, costs, benefits, governance implications, and rules of engagement.*

*ExCo also welcomed a proposal from GFAR to work to facilitate dialogue between CSOs and the CGIAR.*