

## **Alliance Collective Actions: Principles and Steps for Creation and Implementation**

At the Alliance Executive (AE) meeting in Tervuren (May 2008), the AE discussed the need for principles and steps to guide creation and implementation of the Alliance's collective actions. It was noted that the Alliance Principles and Procedures provide clarity on transparency however there was a need to be more specific on what constitutes a collective action and an agreed upon process for establishing such collective actions.

The intent is to have in place a simple and transparent process that will enable audiences, both internal and external to the CGIAR, to be aware of the Alliance's collective actions and to communicate the Centers' intentions in terms of initiating and implementing collective action.

The AE agreed and resolved that if a Centre or group of Centres plans to put forward an initiative that carries the 'Alliance' brand (or name) then the following principles and steps should be followed. These principles and steps will be applied retroactively to existing Alliance initiatives, in particular the reporting back step. Timelines for reporting will be put in place and where, whenever possible, be as simple as possible. Other inter-centre or multi-centre initiatives would not be discouraged from progressing but it was understood that these would not be under the Alliance brand.

### ***Definition of Alliance Collective Actions***

The Alliance Principles and Procedures (A&PP) define collective action among centres thus:

*"Collective action can occur in many different forms, such as in collaborative research programs, partnership formation above the level of one Centre, in capacity building, and in corporate and scientific services. [...] A collective action may take the form of an Alliance-wide collective action, encompassing matters of common interest to all Centres on which a common position or decision is judged to be beneficial to the interests of the CGIAR. In such cases the decision to establish the collective action shall be taken by agreement of all members of the Alliance. Other collective actions shall be established by agreement of all of the Centres participating in the collective action."*

To further clarify what constitutes an Alliance collective action, the additional criterion of strategic importance for the system is added.

Alliance wide collective actions are thus those that:

- i. deal with a significant, important, strategic dimension of the research agenda of the CGIAR centres, or
- ii. deal with a dimension of financial or human resources management that is strategic from the perspective of the CGIAR System

An example of (i) would be a new collective action involving only three centres, but dealing with all the work carried out on animal genetic resources at the level of the Alliance. An example of (ii) would be a new collective action involving 4 or 5 of the centres and dealing with human resources policy at the system/Alliance level. An example of a new action which is not an Alliance collective action would be 2 centres deciding to share IT resources.

### ***Proposed Principles***

The objectives of the few steps proposed below are to 1) assess strategic relevance from the perspective of the system (Alliance level), 2) ensure transparency in its creation/establishment<sup>1</sup> and 3) ensure an effective information flow about the Alliance collective action among all members of the Alliance.

### ***Proposed Three Steps***

#### **1. Consultation of all centres**

Once the objectives of a proposed new collective action are identified<sup>2</sup>, all centres need to be consulted. This is to firm up the objectives and ensure their significance as System level issues and to ascertain all centres' interest in participating.

A proposal for a new collective action, specifying proposed objectives, should therefore be sent to the Chief Alliance Officer who will organise an Alliance wide consultation.

#### **2. Transparency**

(According to 4th principle of the Alliance)

Once a consensus is reached on the relevance of the proposal, and all centres have expressed their decision whether or not to participate in the initiative, a simple mechanism for implementing the initiative has to be defined (as per AP&P "[...] *In collective actions, the obligations of each party and the mechanisms and processes related to the settlement of disputes are to be clearly defined in an agreement at the outset of the activities in a manner that is consistent with the Principles set forth above.*")

It is recommended that an agreement be developed among the Centres participating in an Alliance collective action, clarifying *inter alia*:

- the leading Centre/s (if any)
- research/management objectives, expected outputs and indicators of achievement, timing
- a simple mechanism for decision-making, under the umbrella of the Alliance existing mechanisms (in order not to create unnecessary bureaucracy)
- the funding mechanism
- where relevant, intellectual property issues

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<sup>1</sup> AP&P "The Centres are to ensure transparency through open communication among themselves and with partners and stakeholders."

<sup>2</sup> As per 9th principle of AP&P "For each collective action, problem to be solved or opportunity to be captured, clear specifications and reachable objectives are to be identified by the AE or a cluster of Centers (the participating Centers)."

### **3. Reporting**

Once it is established as an Alliance collective action, the new activity, through its coordinator/leader, will provide regular updates to the Alliance on progress toward objectives. This will be done through an agreement with the Chief Alliance Officer, on a case by case basis and in a manner that is as simple as possible. The CAO will ensure that the AE and AB are informed in a timely and relevant manner.

*Prepared from the approved minutes of the AE meeting, 21 May 2008, Tervuren*