

DAY 3 SUMMARY: E-CONSULTATION ON THE CGIAR REFORM 20-22 October 2009

(Date: Oct 22, 2009, as of 5:30pm)

CONSORTIUM DEVELOPMENT

Key points: Day 3

I. Balance of Authority between Consortium Board and Center Boards

- Need for more clarification on the balance of authority between the Consortium Board and the Centers' Boards.
- One person mentioned that if there is a major problem in the Consortium or its board, the Funders Council will have to step in.
- Two people suggested using a joint venture model where the Consortium is established by the centers through delegated legal personality, rather than setting up a new organization.
- One person suggested that the Consortium could focus on big-picture strategy and recommend funding to the Fund Council which would fund directly to the centers. This avoids duplication of capacity and dysfunction between the Consortium and the Centers
- One person agreed with the institutional arrangements proposed for the Consortium's role.
- One person suggested that Centre Boards should remain ultimately responsible for adherence to international accounting and financial guidelines as well as CGIAR policies.

II. Consortium/Board and Constitution

- Two people mentioned concerns about the Consortium representing an added layer of bureaucracy contradicting the principle of simplified governance and clarified accountability.
- Two people mentioned that the proposed structures seem to complicate the funding, programmatic and reporting arrangements and that unrestricted funding apparently is lost and there will be a greater tendency towards more bilateral support.
- The issue of the scale at which restricted funding operates needs to be clear to make sure everyone is using the term in the same way.
- Promoting ownerships implies more consultations with different partners and policy makers.

III. Consortium Office

- Communications area needs to have more support to properly promote the work of the consortium.
- Need to keep the Consortium office as light as possible. Many competencies as financial intermediaries already exist at the Centers and these should be maintained and "shared" to the appropriate extent.

IV. Performance agreements

- Having performance agreements of MPs between the FC and Consortium Board, and then between the Consortium Board and the Centers, is duplicative. Rather agreements could come from the FC directly to the Centers leading on MPs, with Consortium Board oversight.

V. SRF and Mega Programs

- One person commented that the MP Portfolio should not focus on crosscutting issues and rather focus on commodities and/ or ecosystems.
- One person commented that centers cannot afford to let bilateral restricted research projects drop in order to create MPs that in the end may only make up 20 or less % of the support.

- One person commented that the MP review process described in the report does not necessarily seem more cost effective.
- A person commented that the current draft of SRF does not make a convincing case to donors to double or triple funding. It needs to include an exercise connecting guiding principles with the SRF and from there with the MP.
- MPs need to include realistic flexibility for adjustments.
- A major concern is also how freedom is created and maintained for high-risk/high-payoff innovative blue-sky research, often the source of new paradigmatic shifts.
- Opportunities for comment on the MPs and Platforms will be provided later once Report 5 is released.

FUND DEVELOPMENT

Key points: Day 3

a. Do you agree with the proposed roles and responsibilities of the Fund Council, Funders Forum and the Fund Office?

- A concern was voiced around the “isolation of donors” from Centers, as there appears to be a trend in the change process towards increasing bureaucracy and layers of complexity.
- The issue of duplication was raised relative to the role of the Fund Office in preparing “compliance reports” as it was felt that the Fund Council should be able to work directly with the Consortium’s reporting. Furthermore the term “compliance” was considered “disconcerting” and the suggestion was made to use an alternate term.
- Duplication (and the attendant financial and management costs) was also seen in the arrangements in the flow of funds as envisaged in the new CGIAR. The participant saw the receipt of funds by the Consortium and onward disbursement to the Centers/mega-programs as an unnecessary intermediate step.
- Reaction to the proposed formula for funding the budget of the Fund Office was generally positive, but it was strongly suggested that the Funders’ Forum, Science Advice, Evaluation and Impact assessment functions, and other “System costs” that go beyond the supporting Fund activities should be borne by ALL donors. A suggestion was made on how the Consortium could be funded – through a “very small levy” on ALL funding.
- There was puzzlement about the suggestion in the FFD that the Funders Forum would decide on full cost recovery as this concept was already fundamental in the change process (and presumably not requiring any further decision).

b. Do the proposed approach and criteria for Fund Council membership ensure a balanced representation and provide adequate incentives for increasing funding?

- Two participants disagreed with the suggested financial threshold for a non-rotating Council seat (minimum \$20 million total contribution of which at least \$10 million unrestricted) arguing that this would exclude some important (but restricted) donors. It was argued that, at least at the outset, there should be efforts to encourage inclusivity, in order to keep these important restricted donors engaged, and keep SRF funding flowing through the Fund.
- One participant saw a risk of a “have” versus “have not” relationship developing among the donors in these suggested criteria, with the unintended consequence that some donors may be pushed into bilateral relationships with the Centers where they would have better control over the use of their investments.
- The questions of the role of co-sponsors (or “partner UN agencies”) in the new CGIAR from day 2 were reiterated, and the view expressed seemed to indicate that the membership on the Fund Council by this group was secondary to the clarification of their future role in the new CGIAR, and in any case the idea of having a rotating Council seat for co-sponsors was not supported as this would run counter to the principle of having a voice on the FC commensurate with financial support.

c. Do you agree with the approach for handling "institutional funding?" With the proposed closing of the institutional funding window in 2012?

- The strong opposition to closing of the Institutional Funding window expressed during Day 1 and Day 2 continued. One participant opined that this suggestion was probably grounded on “confusion around the term “institutional funding” and “unrestricted funding”, and proceeded to suggest that regardless of the reference, such funding will be needed “as long as the Centers exist and function”. The participant concluded “it is unrealistic to consider shutting down the institutional window in 2012”.

- Another participant wanted clarification on the question of who decides on the use of window 3 funds? The Center receiving the funds or the Consortium? The answer to this question was important to the donor “as it would make a big difference for all of us”.

Other Comments

- Funding Flows to non-CGIAR entities: Concerns were raised about flowing funds directly to non-CGIAR entities as there might be limited accountability mechanisms in these organizations. Furthermore, for one donor, some of these entities already receive funding from their agency under separate authorities from CGIAR funding.
- Blue Sky research: One participant suggested that if “blue sky research” meant something that is purely curiosity driven, this should not have a place in the CGIAR. All research in the CGIAR should be motivated by its plausible potential to deliver benefits for society.
- Science quality: It was observed that science quality should include the notion of potential impact on real problems, rather than inherent elegance or purity of science, which are outdated concepts with no place in the CGIAR.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Key points: Day 3

- One participant suggested to first agree on a number of basic principles of M&E, and once we have a better understanding of the final Consortium, Fund and MP design develop the M&E framework more fully
- One participant reiterated that monitoring is a function of management and therefore research progress should be measured by the research managers. At the same time support was voiced by the same participant for the idea of “common indicators” expressed in the M&E document.
- the issue of ensuring that evaluations are managed by people with recognized scientific background was again flagged by another participant.
- One participant, on behalf of the full EIARD group, expressed support to the “proposed arrangements [referring to the M&E framework document], with a harmonised M&E system managed through an independent arrangement”.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE INDEPENDENT SCIENCE AND PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL (ISPC)

Key points: Day 3

Highlights of Comments/Suggestions (from 6 participants)

- One participant pointed to the lack of attention given to two other components of the CGIAR change process: system mindset and trust and empathy. This was made in the context of the SC paper on M&E.
- Two participants expressed disagreement with ISPC's role as adviser on partnership models, pointing out that development and improvement of such models is an important function of the Consortium
- One participant representing a group of donors expressed the group's agreement that the M&E functions are better placed outside of ISPC.
- One intervention argues against the creation of a permanent ISPC and offers an alternative mechanism by which donors could interact with the scientific community and avail of scientific advice or commission program reviews.
- One participant pointed out that the "potential disconnect between the "funders" and the "doers" by an ISPC may be overstated."