

# TERMS OF REFERENCE

for the Evaluation of the  
CGIAR Research Program on  
Aquatic Agricultural Systems (AAS)  
JUNE 2014



Independent  
Evaluation  
Arrangement

## 1. Background

### 1.1. Rationale and context

Research in the CGIAR is guided by the Strategy and Results Framework (SRF), which sets forth the System's common goals in terms of development impact (System-Level Outcomes [SLOs])<sup>1</sup>, strategic objectives in areas of comparative advantage and results. The SRF was first approved in 2011 and it has been updated in 2014. The CGIAR's research agenda is implemented by the CGIAR Centres and their partners through multi-partner CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs); currently 15. It is funded through a pooled funding mechanism in the Fund<sup>2</sup> and bilateral funding to Centers. In the SRF Management Update from early 2014 a set of Intermediate Development Outcomes (IDOs) linked to the high level impact goals will be defined to form the operational results framework for the CRPs.

In the CGIAR, the Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA) Office is responsible for System-level external evaluations. The main mandate of the IEA is to lead the implementation of the CGIAR Policy for Independent External Evaluations<sup>3</sup>, through the conduct of strategic evaluations of the CGIAR CRPs and institutional elements of the CGIAR and through the development of a coordinated, harmonized and cost-effective evaluation system in the CGIAR.

The IEA's first four-year Rolling Evaluation Work Plan 2014-17, approved in November 2013 by the Fund Council, foresees the evaluation of up to 10 CRPs over 2013-2015. The order in which the CRPs will be evaluated was established on basis of multiple criteria including the starting date of the CRP, and donor feed-back.

One of the CRPs to be evaluated in 2014 is the CRP on Aquatic Agricultural Systems (AAS).

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<sup>1</sup> Defined as four System-Level Outcomes: reduction of poverty, improvement of food security, increasing nutrition and health; and more sustainable management of natural resources.

<sup>2</sup> The CGIAR Fund is a multi-donor, multi-year funding mechanism that provides funding to (i) CRPs through two "Windows"; Window 1 across CRPs as per Consortium decision and Window 2 to donor-specified CRP; and to (ii) donor-specified Centers through Window 3.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.cgiarfund.org/sites/cgiarfund.org/files/Documents/PDF/CGIAR\\_evaluation\\_policy\\_jan2012.pdf](http://www.cgiarfund.org/sites/cgiarfund.org/files/Documents/PDF/CGIAR_evaluation_policy_jan2012.pdf)

## 1.2. Overview

### Program design and approach

WorldFish is the Lead Center for AAS, and the other CGIAR Center partners managing the program are the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and Bioversity International. A number of development NGOs that work globally played a key role AAS's program design and are playing a central role in its implementation.

The proposal for AAS was submitted to the Fund Council for its 5<sup>th</sup> meeting in July 2011 and approved with minor adjustments. AAS aims to reduce poverty and improve food security for people whose livelihoods depend on aquatic agricultural systems. The Program operates in selected sites that represent the mega deltas of Asia, the Asia-Pacific islands and African freshwater systems. In these areas rural livelihoods rely strongly on family-based farming systems with fishing and/or aquaculture as an integral part in most places.

The program uses a very distinct approach that includes research in development and learning about processes for delivering development outcomes in aquatic agriculture systems. Its implementation focuses on participatory action research within a set of geographical "learning hubs". The approach puts emphasis on engaging with farmers, fishers, NGOs and government institutions in each hub to identify the main challenges and thereby the research priorities. It involves the potential beneficiaries as "co-researchers" in action research. A key feature of AAS is its aim at transformational gender change. The program builds on past research, particularly of WorldFish Center, and a major emphasis is on harnessing the full potential of aquatic agricultural systems for increasing productivity.

Within the locations that represent geographical flagships/hubs of the CRP, AAS aims at integrating co-located research of different centers and CRPs. The hubs are operating currently in 5 countries; in 2012 AAS was rolled out in Zambia, Solomon Islands and Bangladesh, followed by the Philippines and Cambodia in 2013. Each of the hubs has different research priorities based on the key development challenges identified with local stakeholders and other partners.

Until the end of 2013 AAS was in a formative stage and the focus was on complementing the program design process in each hub and to align and integrate bilaterally funded projects. Detailed research design is now in place in all five hubs and implementation is underway.

AAS research falls under six research themes which are applied differently depending on the priorities identified in each geographical hub:



1. **Sustainable increases in system productivity:** This theme will attend to resource use efficiency (e.g. in the use of water, land, energy, nutrients and other inputs) and avoiding adverse environmental impacts from increasing crop and animal productivity. It aims to develop and secure these resource inputs and develop innovative production and postharvest technologies working with partners to foster their adoption. There is linkage to the research theme on social-ecological resilience and adaptive capacity. Research in this

theme will link closely with other more commodity-oriented CRPs operating in the same locations.



2. **Equitable access to markets:** Research will focus on understanding how to improve market access for crop, livestock and aquatic products produced by poor and vulnerable households in AAS. Opportunities will be identified for equitable value chain development seeking jointly with market chain actors improved production and processing methods, market innovations and institutional change.



3. **Social-ecological resilience and adaptive capacity:** This theme will combine ecological and social research. Ecological research will examine ecosystem resilience and the services derived from food production systems. Research in this theme will encompass fisheries governance questions and seek to expand existing WorldFish research on grounding resilience theory in the practice of AAS governance. Social research will feature action research, both in communities and through integrative analysis across communities and hubs.



4. **Gender equality:** AAS places a strong emphasis on gender and uses a transformative approach to gender mainstreaming thus responding to the multiplicity of identities shaping women's and men's positions, motivations and opportunities. This is reflected in its Gender Strategy which was published in 2012.



5. **Policies and institutions to empower AAS users:** AAS will work with government and civil society organizations to articulate and address citizen's concerns about policies and institutions that are identified as inhibiting the development in the AAS. Ways to strengthen the implementation of good policy where it exists will be identified.



6. **Knowledge sharing, learning, and innovation:** Knowledge sharing is at the very core of the AAS as evidenced by its in research theme status. This theme supports the delivery of outcomes of the other Themes by catalyzing knowledge sharing and learning in partners and stakeholders. It advances the Program strategy for scaling up through network development, knowledge dissemination, capacity building and advocacy. AAS uses an integrated approach to knowledge management which includes communications, information, data management and monitoring and evaluation practice.

### Evolution of AAS Theory of Change<sup>4</sup>

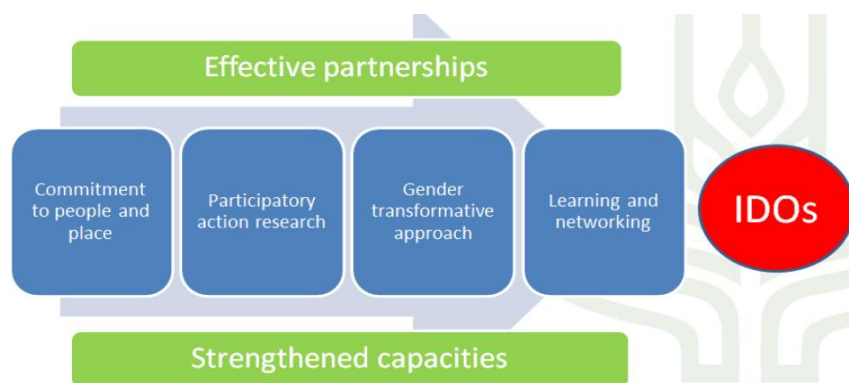
Since its inception in 2011, AAS has been developing its Theory of Change, which involved changes in program structure (especially the move to Flagships) and also further refinement of its IDOs which – through scaling out of hub research results - are meant to ultimately contribute to achieving the CGIAR System Level Outcomes/development impact. The most recent Theory of Change has been outlined in the AAS Extension Proposal 2015-2016 which was submitted to the Consortium Office in April 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Please refer to POWB 2014 and Extension Proposal for 2015-2016 for further, more detailed information.

The Research in Development approach shown in Figure 1 remains at the core of the AAS Theory of Change.

In the Program of Work and Budget (POWB) 2014 as well as the Extension Proposal 2015-2016, the initial 11 IDOS have been reduced to 7 IDOs relating to so called “material” and “enabling” outcomes which are shown in the table below. For the POWB 2014, the program has been structured along six Flagships, of which five relate to the geographical hubs. The 6<sup>th</sup> flagship on global science and scaling aims to contribute to outcomes at regional and global levels. The 6 flagships will be reduced to 4 for the program’s extension in 2015 and 2016 with 3 focusing on the aquatic landscapes where AAS works (Asian Mega Deltas, Asia-Pacific Islands and African inland waters), and the 4<sup>th</sup> global flagship providing for the strategic analysis..

**Figure 1: AAS implementation theory and RinD approach**



Source: AAS Working paper: Using theory of change to achieve impacts in AAS.

**Table 1. AAS IDOs**

<b>Material</b>
<b>1. Income:</b> Increased and more equitable income from agricultural and natural resource management and environmental services earned by low income value chain actors in aquatic agricultural systems
<b>2. Nutrition:</b> Improved diet quality of low income households in aquatic agricultural systems, especially by nutritionally vulnerable women and children
<b>3. Future Options:</b> Greater resilience in aquatic agricultural systems for enhanced ecosystem services
<b>Enabling</b>
<b>4. Productivity:</b> Improved productivity in aquatic agricultural systems (water and total factor productivity)
<b>5. Gender &amp; Empowerment:</b> Increased control of assets, inputs, decision-making and benefits by women and other marginalized groups in aquatic agricultural systems
<b>6. Capacity to innovate:</b> Increased capacity to innovate within low income and vulnerable rural communities in aquatic agricultural systems
<b>7. Capacity to adapt:</b> Increased capacity to adapt to environmental and economic variability, shocks and longer term changes in low income communities in aquatic agricultural systems

### Geographical focus

In the AAS proposal the CRP suggested to focus initially on a few countries in the major aquatic agriculture systems of the Asian mega deltas, the Asia-Pacific islands of the Coral Triangle and African freshwater systems. The choice of AAS focal countries was based on the importance of aquatic agriculture systems to the rural economy, the degree of commitment to implementing the program and the quality of partnerships for scaling out.

In 2012 AAS was rolled out in Bangladesh (Southern Polder Zone), Solomon Islands (Malaita Province) and Zambia (Barotse floodplain, Western Province), followed by Cambodia (Tonle Sap) and the Philippines (Visayas-Mindanao) in 2013. Currently, AAS is active in five action research hubs in these five countries.

### Budget and expenditure

AAS is one of the smallest CRPs (in 2012 contributing 3% of total CRP expenditure). The three year (2011-2013) budget proposals for AAS was USD 59 million, with about 30% increase projected from 2011 to 2013. At that point the budget for the subsequent three-year period (2014-2017) was estimated at about USD 85 million. Of the 2011-13 funding, about 20% was projected to come from the Fund (Windows 1 and 2<sup>5</sup>) and 45% from restricted sources, leaving the source for about a third of the estimated budget unknown at the time.

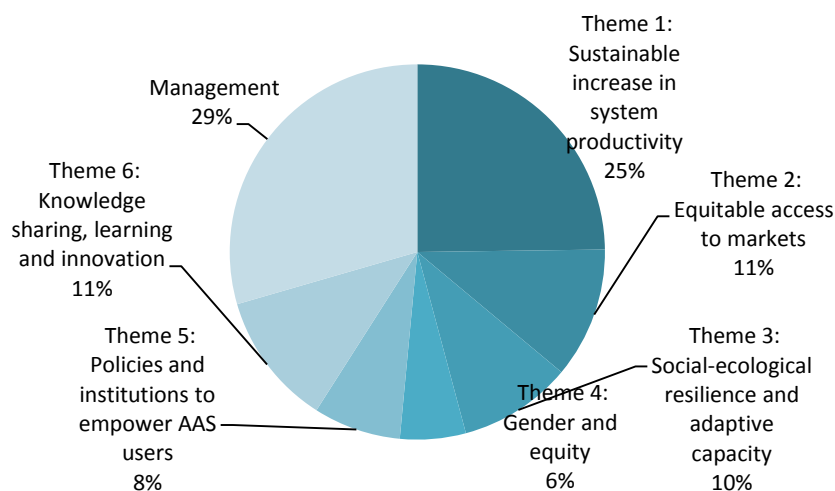
In the first two full years, from July 2011 to July 2013, AAS spent a total of USD 39 million, of which 96 percent were spent through WorldFish, 3% by IWMI and about 1% by Bioversity. Of the WorldFish budget, close to half reflects recruitments for AAS program research through the lead-Center, and some 50% of total budget is allocated to WorldFish research continuing in the new program. In the first full year of operation, 2012, AAS funding was USD 20.1 million – the level estimated in the proposal for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of operations. Of that, 36% came from the Fund (Window 1&2), 5% was direct center funding (window 3) and 59% bilateral funding. USAID is the largest bilateral donor of AAS.

The expenditure distribution analysis (Figure 2) shows that almost a third was spent on issues grouped under Management that include, in addition to governance and management, also partnership, communications and science leadership and support, and are funded by Window 1/2. The second largest area is Theme 1 on Sustainable increases in system productivity with 25%.

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<sup>5</sup> For further information on CGIAR funding please see: [http://www.cgiarfund.org/how\\_the\\_fund\\_works](http://www.cgiarfund.org/how_the_fund_works)

Figure 2: Expenditure (Jul 2011–Jul 2013) by Theme



Source: AAS Lead Center Report to Consortium Office (2012 and Q22013) by Theme and Funding

## Governance and management

AAS is managed by a CRP leader who is based at WorldFish in Penang, Malaysia and supported by staff at a Program Support Unit dedicated for operations, communications and finance. The Program Leadership Team serves as a high level and high functioning management committee for the CRP. It is composed of representatives from participating CGIAR centers, CARE, Catholic Relief Services, country managers and the six research theme leaders and is chaired by the CRP leader. The Program Leadership Team and Program Support Unit had a budget of around USD 1.2 million.

The main oversight body is the Program Advisory Panel (POP), which was established in November 2011 by the WorldFish Board of Trustees to which it reports. It currently consists of eight independent members who are recognized scientists and practitioners.

## 2. Evaluation Focus

### 2.1. Evaluation purpose and clients

The primary purpose of this evaluation is to enhance the contribution that AAS is likely to make towards reaching the CGIAR goals and towards reducing poverty and improving food security for people whose livelihoods depend on aquatic agricultural systems.

As for all CRP evaluations, the purpose of the evaluation of AAS is to provide essential evaluative information for decision-making by Program management and its funders on issues such as extension, expansion and structuring of the program and adjustments in some aspects of the program.

## Terms of Reference, CRP on AAS, June 2014

In November 2013, the Fund Council of the CGIAR agreed that all current CRPs should undergo some form of evaluation before the call for the second round of CRPs and full proposal development is initiated. In that context, the evaluation of AAS will provide information for decisions on the program formulation and selection in the 2<sup>nd</sup> funding call in 2016. Taking into account the stage of the program and given its nature and timelines for results, the evaluation aims to provide an overview and critical analysis of the relevance of the program and its achievements to date and progress towards their achievement.

The evaluation provides both accountability - re-enforcing the principle of mutual accountability and responsibility among program, donors and partners - and learning among the CRP and its stakeholders for improving program relevance and efficiency and the likelihood of sustainable results. It will look at the extent to which AAS within its mandate is responding to the key aspirations underlying the CGIAR reform related to vision and focus, delivery orientation, synergy through efficient partnerships and accountability.

The main stakeholders of this evaluation are the management of AAS, the participating CGIAR Centers, partners associated with the Program, the Consortium Board and the CGIAR Fund Council.

Stakeholders will be consulted throughout the evaluation through structured interviews, surveys, site visits, and reference group for some of them.

**Table 1: CRP evaluation stakeholders**

Type of stakeholder	Role in CRP	Interest in evaluation
<b>CRP level</b>		
CRP management	Management of CRP	Lessons learned to increase performance of CRP
CRP governance committee	Oversight of CRP Strategic advice for CRP	Accountability CRP performance Lessons learned about effectiveness of Governance committees
CRP Researchers	Carry out research in line with CRP IDOs	Research performance
<b>Center level</b>		
Lead center management	Management of CRP	Organizational performance Comparative advantage
Lead center board	Fiduciary responsibility Oversight of the CRP	Organizational performance Comparative advantage
Boards and management of participating centers	Oversight of CRP activities carried out by its center	Organizational performance Comparative advantage
<b>CGIAR level</b>		
CGIAR Fund Council	Oversight on use of funds for CRP	Accountability CRP performance Decision making for resource allocation
Donors of bilateral projects	Funding source	Accountability CRP performance Decision making for resource allocation
CGIAR Consortium	Integrating CRP research with other CRPs, strategic alignment of CRPs,	Lessons learned to increase the effectiveness and relevance of the work of the CGIAR;



Type of stakeholder	Role in CRP	Interest in evaluation
	coordinating between CRPs	Lessons learned to increase the efficiency and accountability of the CGIAR.
<b>Partners</b>		
Research partners, including “co-researchers” at learning hubs	participate in the design and conduct of CRP research	Research Performance Collaboration mechanisms, Capacity development
Development and Boundary Partners	targeted stakeholders for implementing change	Relevance of CRP and its research, Research Performance, Collaboration mechanisms, Capacity development
Beneficiaries; e.g. farmers and policy-makers	targeted beneficiaries for development oriented research	Relevance, effectiveness and impact of CRP and its research

Source: IEA.

## 2.2. Evaluation scope

The evaluation will cover all research activities of AAS and related processes, thus including activities funded by Window 1, 2 and 3 as well as projects funded from Window 3 and bilateral sources. In the new CGIAR framework, AAS takes an approach with a strong emphasis on understanding the determinants of development outcomes, identification of problems by and involvement of communities. Therefore in assessing research performance, particular emphasis will be given to that novel approach and its likelihood of leading to sustainable outcomes and impact in aquatic agriculture systems.

The evaluation will be both summative and formative. The dimension of the evaluation that will cover past, “**transferred**” research (thus continued and carried on within AAS) is **summative** and will determine the extent to which results at outcome and impact level have been achieved and look at early results from the current program. As the AAS CRP was formally launched only in mid-2011, the dimension of the evaluation that will focus on the **new programmatic approach** is **formative** and takes into account the sequenced rolling-out of the activities in the five learning hubs. Given the nature of the program and its short history, the evaluation will have a strong formative component. The evaluation will also look at the extent to which lessons from past research and experiences regarding results have been taken into account in the current program design and implementation.

The evaluation is being undertaken at a time when the CRP is completing the design of its program in accordance of guidance from the CGIAR Consortium Office and within the context of the SRF. Since its initiation, the CRP has evolved as is evident in the extension proposal for 2015-16. The evaluation will look at the program evolution including the development of theories and impact pathways for the key components of the CRP, IDOs and indicators for progress and results in the short- and medium-term.

The evaluation will not only examine the quality and relevance of CRP research itself but its institutional context and relation to other CRPs, in particular the integration of activities at location level across several CRPs, which is an explicit operational mode of the AAS. This will include examining the effectiveness and efficiency of the institutional structure and management systems of



the CRP, the extent to which it incentivizes among scientists and partners high quality research oriented towards tangible outcomes and the efficiency of integration upon which some of the AAS result depend on. The evaluation will also examine the “research in development” concepts and operationalization of research within that context, particularly regarding early lessons from hub-based research prioritization, setting up the monitoring and evaluation framework and other components of the approach (see Fig. 1).

The strategic issues and evaluation questions are structured around two dimensions: Research/programmatic performance and organizational performance. The Evaluation Team is tasked to refine and prioritize them during the inception phase, in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

### Research/programmatic performance

The AAS evaluation will have its focus on two time frames:

- the results – outputs, outcomes and impacts – generated from research prior to establishment of AAS and filling the results pipeline also into the future for some time; and
- the period during which AAS has been set up as a multi-partner CRP with newly defined program structure, targets and impact pathways.

The evaluation of programmatic performance will address all the evaluation criteria presented in Section 3.

The evaluation will look at key conceptual frameworks underlying AAS strategy, and the process and analytical rigor in the development of impact pathways including the plausibility of linkages between outputs and outcomes to the IDOs and beyond towards the SLOs. It will look at the assumptions including those that relate to external factors that are crucial for the planned outcomes and impact. It will also look at the validity of the assumptions underlying the program theory for impact and the research hypotheses related to those assumptions.

The evaluation will examine the extent to which the challenges for linking research outputs to development outcomes and scaling out promising results are addressed in the program. As the dimensions of innovations systems, gender, partnership, capacity building and communication are central to the AAS strategy, the evaluation will address these areas across themes and institutional arrangements and as they relate to overcoming constraints to development, sustainability of results and likelihood of impact.

### Organizational performance

The evaluation of organizational performance will primarily pertain to aspects of efficiency and effectiveness with focus on CRP design, structure and processes from the organizational and management point of view.

Areas of emphasis include the changes and value-added brought about by the CRP structure relative to the previous programs, including in organizational effectiveness, management structure, system, partnership management and transaction costs; the monitoring and evaluation framework, resource allocation and fund distribution between institutions and program components, and alignment of

different funding with program objectives; adherence to legal arrangements, including System-level obligations; and organizational learning for improving likely efficiency and effectiveness.

### 3. Evaluation criteria and questions

#### 3.1. Overarching questions

There are overarching questions that cut across the evaluation criteria presented below.

- Is the programmatic approach clearly defined in the sum of components from the participating Centers that constitute the program?
- Are the core elements of the AAS approach likely to be effective for delivering development change?
- What is the added value of the AAS Research in Development approach to the other (CGIAR) research activities that AAS aims at integrating in its locations?
- Does the CRP and its partner organizations have the comparative advantage and requisite competences for conducting activities related to the Research in Development approach?
- Is the theoretical base for research on social change, including transformational gender change, sound for guiding research activities and monitoring?
- Is the research likely to generate public goods knowledge that has applicability beyond the hubs where AAS operates and is likely to be scaled up?
- How effectively does AAS draw on research generated in the CG system and how can it foster appropriate productivity research?

#### 3.2. Evaluation criteria and questions

The AAS evaluation will address the six evaluation criteria; relevance, efficiency, quality of science, effectiveness, impact and sustainability through a set of evaluation questions. A tentative list of evaluation questions is given below. These will be prioritized, refined and further elaborated during the inception phase by the Evaluation Team in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

##### Relevance<sup>6</sup>

- Is the AAS CRP strategically coherent and consistent with the main goals and System Level Outcomes presented in the CGIAR's Strategy and Results Framework?
- To what extent are the CRP Themes coherent within the overall CRP research design?
- To what extent is core-type funding (Windows 1 and 2) used for leveraging bilateral funding and alignment of bilateral projects within program strategy?
- Have the CRP research activities been adequately prioritized in line with resource availability?
- Are the hub-based activities prioritized for enhancing the relevance and coherence of the overall research agenda?

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<sup>6</sup> Including coherence, comparative advantage and program design

- In the different areas of research does AAS play an appropriate role as global leader, facilitator or user of research compared to partners and other research suppliers?
- Does the program target an appropriate set of Intermediate Development Outcomes (IDOs) and are the activities those of highest priority for achievement of the objectives?
- Does the CRP Theory of Change provide a convincing logic for how the AAS approach enhances likely impact towards the IDOs and SLOs and is it strategically used for managing the program?
- Have constraints to outcomes and impacts been considered in the program design, for example through assessment of the assumptions and risks in reliance on policies, actions of national institutions, capacity and partnerships?

### Efficiency

- Are the AAS institutional arrangements and management and governance mechanisms efficient and effective?
- To what extent do the reformed CGIAR organizational structures and processes increase (or decrease) efficiency and successful program implementation?
- Is the level of collaboration and coordination within the CRP and with other CRPs appropriate and efficient for reaching maximum synergies and enhancing partner capacity?
- Is the monitoring and evaluation system efficient for recording and enhancing CRP processes, progress, learning and achievements?

### Quality of science

- Do the research design, problem setting and choice of approaches reflect high quality in scientific thinking, state-of-the-art knowledge and novelty in all areas of research?
- Is it evident that the program builds on and learns from previous research results?
- Are the internal processes and conditions, including research staff and leadership quality, adequate for assuring science quality?
- Are the research outputs, such as publications, of high quality?

### Effectiveness, impact and sustainability

- To what extent have planned outputs and outcomes been achieved or are likely to be achieved?
- Have there been sufficient efforts to document outcomes and impact from past research with reasonable coverage over research areas?
- What can be concluded from the findings of *ex post* studies, for instance in terms of magnitude of impact in different geographical regions relevant for AAS, sustainability of change and equity of benefits?
- Have adequate constraint analyses and lessons from *ex post* studies informed program design for enhancing the likelihood of impact?
- To what extent are hub-level positive outcomes likely to be sustained and out-scalable?
- What are the prospects for sustaining financing, for example, for long-term research programs and key partnerships?

### 3.3. Core programmatic cross-cutting themes:

#### Gender

The evaluation of gender takes into consideration the CRP concept and objective of transformational gender change and pertains particularly to relevance, impact and sustainability:

- Has gender been adequately considered in the impact pathway analysis across Program themes, in terms of the differential roles of women and men along the impact pathway, generating equitable benefits for both women and men and enhancing the overall likelihood of enhancing the livelihoods of women?
- Are the research strategy and modalities of implementation appropriate for the Program objective on gender and likely to enhance sustainability of results to remove gender disparities?

#### Capacity development

The evaluation of capacity development will address particularly, effectiveness and sustainability:

- To what extent does the Program's capacity development strategy address partners' needs at different levels from individual to community to institutional?
- Does capacity development target women as well as men adequately taking their differential needs into account?
- Are capacity issues and constraints adequately considered in the impact pathway analysis?
- Are the capacity building efforts well integrated with the CRP research and adequate for enhancing the long-term sustainability of program effects, including the capacity to innovate?

#### Partnerships

The evaluation will consider partnerships at the AAS locations and learning hubs with organizational and community partners as well as boundary partner organization upon whom the development outcomes may depend. It will also consider partnerships among the implementing centers (WorldFish, IWMI and Bioversity) and linkages and potential synergy with other CRPs. Evaluation questions relate particularly to relevance, quality of science, efficiency and effectiveness (and thus the quality of partnerships):

- Are the partnerships, the groups and actors involved, the most relevant for the research design, for conducting effective participatory action research and for achieving program objectives?
- Is quality of science appropriately determined, assured and maintained in action research involving co-research arrangements among community actors?
- Are the partnerships chosen and managed so as to maximize Program efficiency and effectiveness for results?

## 4. Evaluation approach and methodology

### 4.1. Approach and methodology

The summative part of the evaluation will draw, to the extent possible, on existing studies and evaluative information and data on results, outcomes and impact. This approach will be complemented by other means such gathering perception information during site visits and stakeholder interviews. The summative part covers past research by AAS center partners, the WorldFish Center in particular, that forms the basis of the current research or is continuing in AAS, including continuing research engagement in certain geographic locations. It covers also emergent outputs and outcomes from the AAS.

The forward-looking component will review *inter alia*, the approach of participatory action research that AAS takes, program design, its innovation systems context and processes, progress made so far in rolling out the research design and concepts in the learning hubs and any progress towards results, gender mainstreaming, governance and partnership aspects as well as other modalities of work adopted in the AAS. Approaches will be selected that use, for instance, lessons from research in similar programs, good practices in management established elsewhere, and information from primary contacts.

The evaluation process will be consultative; ensuring that in developing findings, conclusions and recommendations there is wide-ranging consultation among stakeholders for capturing a broadly representative range of viewpoints. The evaluation team should ensure that the findings are informed by evidence. This implies that all perceptions, hypotheses and assertions obtained in interviews will be validated through secondary filtering, cross checks by a triangulation of sources, methods, data, and theories. The main phases of the evaluation are described below.

### 4.2. Evaluation Phases

#### Preparatory phase

During the Preparatory Phase the IEA, in consultation with relevant stakeholder, will review key documents, carry out a preliminary mapping of the CRP activities, and define the scope and issues surrounding the evaluation.

The IEA will carry out the following tasks:

- Set up a Reference Group for the evaluation (in collaboration with AAS management)
- Finalize the Terms of Reference (considering inputs from Reference Group)
- Compile information on research projects under AAS and existing evaluation material and other key documents pertaining to AAS
- Select the evaluation team leader and in consultation with her/him, the evaluation team and contract all team members

#### Inception phase

The inception phase is the responsibility of the Evaluation Team with support from the IEA. The evaluation's scope, focus, approaches and methods, and the evaluation questions in detail will be defined during the inception phase. The tasks during the inception phase include:

- Review and synthesis of monitoring information pertaining to AAS that form basis evaluation plan as presented in the inception report, including: (i) information derived from the CRP's monitoring and evaluation system; (ii) impact assessments; (ii) management related materials
- Development of an analytical framework for the assessment of AAS research.
- Refinement of the evaluation questions and an evaluation matrix that identifies means of addressing the questions, including an outline of the data collection methods/instruments
- Detailed specification of the evaluation timetable which includes plan for site visits.
- Indicative evaluation report outline and division of roles and responsibilities among the team.
- Preliminary list of strategic areas of importance prioritized for emphasis in the course of the inquiry phase.

These elements will be drawn together in an evaluation inception report which, once agreed between the team and the IEA will represent the basis for the team's work. Subject to the agreement of the Head IEA, adjustments can be made in a transparent fashion during evaluation implementation in the light of experience.

### Inquiry phase

The Evaluation will build on the outputs of the inception phase and proceed with the inquiry, by acquiring more information and data from documents and relevant stakeholders, to deepen the analysis. The methods and approached that are refined in the inception report, may include:

- Interviews with a variety of stakeholders both within and outside the CGIAR for obtaining qualitative views on, for instance, relevance and quality of research, likely effectiveness and aspects of partnership management.
- Surveys among CRP researchers, partners and other stakeholders for gauging general perceptions and satisfaction with CRP relevance, progress and achievements.
- Site visits to AAS learning hubs to generate information of program activities and partner relations. Use will be made of management and research meetings that allow engagement with a range of stakeholders.
- Focus group discussions.
- Case studies of selected research areas or projects.

### Reporting and dissemination phase

See 5.4 for further information

## 4.3. Quality Assurance

In order to ensure technical rigor to the Evaluation, the following quality assurance mechanisms will be implemented during the evaluation exercise:

The IEA, and the evaluation manager will conduct quality control throughout the evaluation process. The IEA will work closely with the evaluation team throughout the evaluation and will ensure that the conduct of the evaluation and its approaches, methods and deliverables are in line with the Evaluation policy, Guidelines and Standards.

The IEA's Quality Assurance Advisory Panel (QAAP) will also provide feed-back at different milestones, including terms of reference, inception report and evaluation report.

An expert panel, consisting of external, independent experts in subject matter areas of AAS will examine the quality of the evaluation report in terms of substance, including the technical and contextual soundness of the evaluation findings and conclusions.

### 4.4. Main limitations and constraints of evaluation

Due to the limited time that the CRP has been in operation, the evaluation has only a relatively short time for assessing program performance and achievements to-date. The evaluation's ability to assess achievements and impact from past research relevant to the current CRP may be limited by the lack of evaluative information across program areas. The evaluation team also needs to judge to what extent past success or lack of it is relevant for evaluating the likelihood of success of the newly designed program, given the changes in the research approach. The geographic spread and location orientation of the CRP may limit the ability of the evaluation team to collect primary information across communities and stakeholder groups and there is need to select suitable methods to assess the CRP that allow representative evidence to be gathered across heterogeneous operation and target domains.

## 5. Organization and timing of the Evaluation

### 5.1. Evaluation team qualifications

The evaluation team leader will have suitable background given the AAS research themes and the participatory action research approach and solid experience in leading evaluations of complex programs. The team leader will be supported by a team of experts who will between them have extensive and proven experience at international level on issues, programs and policies related to aquatic agricultural farming systems in developing country context. They will also have demonstrated knowledge of the main global institutions involved in fisheries and aquacultures and key issues related to agricultural innovation systems.

The team is likely to include 3-4 experts, in addition to the team leader. Among its members, the team will have an excellent understanding and knowledge of the research issues and international debate on following areas:

- Participatory action research approaches and innovation systems
- Social transformation and gender equity
- Natural Resource Management research, farming systems and resource/system resilience
- Agricultural and fisheries productivity, production and value chain issues



- Policy environment relevant to aquatic agriculture systems and community development.
- Risks and vulnerability assessment;
- Program governance, organization and management, including financial management
- Capacity building
- Research planning, methods and management
- Communication and partnership

The team members should not have engaged with the CRP, participating Centers or key partners in any way that would present an actual or perceived conflict of interest.

### 5.2. Evaluation governance/roles and responsibilities

The Evaluation will be conducted by a team of **independent external experts**. The team leader has final responsibility for the evaluation report and all findings and recommendations, subject to adherence to CGIAR Evaluation Standards. The evaluation team is responsible for submitting the deliverables as outlined in more detail below.

The **IEA** will be responsible for planning, initial designing, initiating, and managing the evaluation. The IEA will also be responsible for the quality control of the evaluation process and outputs, and dissemination of the results. The IEA will take an active role in the preparatory phase of the evaluation by collecting background data and information and by carrying out preliminary analysis on the CRP on AAS. An evaluation manager assisted by an evaluation analyst will provide support to the team throughout the evaluation.

A **Reference Group** will be set-up to work with the IEA evaluation manager to ensure good communication with, learning by, and appropriate accountability to primary evaluation clients and key stakeholders, while preserving the independence of evaluators. The Reference Group, composed of CRP stakeholders, can be thought of as a 'sounding board' and it will give views and inputs at key decision stages in the evaluation design and implementation process, such as finalising the TOR, the inception report and evaluation report.

**AAS management** plays a key role in catering for the evaluation team's needs information on the CRP throughout the evaluation process. It provides documentation and data, information on all AAS activities, access to staff for engagement with the evaluators, and information on partners and stakeholders. It facilitates arrangement of site visits and appointments within the lead Center and other stakeholders. AAS management is also responsible for giving factual feed-back on the draft evaluation report and preparing the management response to the final report. It assists in dissemination of the report and its finding and lessons and it acts on the accepted recommendations. While the evaluation is coordinated with the CRP management, WorldFish as the lead Center is a key stakeholder in the evaluation. It hosts the visits to the Center and its leadership and Board are expected to make themselves available for consultations during the evaluation process.

### 5.3. Timeline

The CRP evaluation is scheduled to take place between mid2014 and mid2015.

**Table 2: Preliminary timeline for evaluation**

Phase	Period	Main outputs	Responsibility
<b>Preparatory Phase</b>	Feb 2013 – May 2014	Final ToR Evaluation team recruited	IEA
<b>Inception Phase</b>	June 2014 – Aug 2014	<b>Inception Report</b>	Evaluation team
<b>Inquiry phase</b>	Sep 2014 – Dec 2015	Various reports and analysis products as defined in inception report	Evaluation team
Presentation of preliminary findings	Dec 2015	Presentation of preliminary findings Feedback from main stakeholders	Evaluation team IEA
<b>Reporting phase</b>			
Drafting of Report	Jan 2014 – Feb 2015	<b>Draft Evaluation Report</b>	Evaluation team
Final Evaluation Report	Mar 2015	<b>Final Evaluation Report</b>	Evaluation team
Management Response	Apr 2015	Management Response	CRP Management
<b>Dissemination phase</b>	May 2015	Communications products	IEA Team leader CRP Management

## 5.4. Deliverables and dissemination of findings

The **Inception Report** - builds on the original terms of reference for the evaluation and proposed the approach to the main phase of the evaluation. It constitutes the guide for conducting the evaluation, by (i) outlining the scope of the evaluation; (ii) providing a detailed evaluation matrix; (iii) clarifying the analytical frameworks which will be utilized by the evaluation; (iv) developing the methodological tools and (v) providing a detailed work plan for the Evaluation.

The **Evaluation Report** - the main output of this evaluation - will describe findings, conclusions, and recommendations, based on the evidence collected in the framework of the evaluation questions defined in the Inception Report. The recommendations will be evidence-based, relevant, focused, clearly formulated and actionable. They will be prioritized and addressed to the different stakeholders responsible for their implementation. The main findings and recommendations will be summarized in an executive summary. Evaluation findings and conclusions are to consider actual resources available to AAS and state what recommendations are resource-neutral and what recommendations imply a greater/smaller budget.

**Presentations** will be prepared by the Team Leader for disseminating the Report to targeted audiences. The exact forms of these presentations will be agreed during the inception phase. Adequate consultations with AAS stakeholders will be ensured throughout the process, with debriefings on preliminary and key findings held at various stages of the evaluation. The final report

will be presented to key CGIAR stakeholders. Following this, the IEA will interact with the management of AAS during the preparation of the management response.

**AAS Management will prepare a management response to the evaluation** for the consideration of the Consortium Board. The management response will be specific in its response to evaluation recommendations as to the extent to which it accepts the recommendation and reasons for partial acceptance and non-acceptance, and for those recommendations which it accepts partially or in full, what follow-up action it intends to take, in what time-frame. The consolidated response of AAS management and the Consortium Board will be a public document made available together with the evaluation report for the consideration of the CGIAR Fund Council.

Several events will be organized and several means considered to disseminate the evaluation results. A dissemination strategy will be developed during the inception phase.