

Terms of Reference

Evaluation of the Project “Strengthening Impact Assessment in the CGIAR 2013-16”

1. Background

1.1. Introduction

CGIAR (the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research) is a global partnership uniting organizations engaged in research for a food secure future. At the core of the CGIAR is a network of 15 research centers carrying out research on across the broad domains of crop genetic improvement, natural resource management and policy research funded through investments by over 60 government agencies, international development banks and other public and private non-profit donors.

The Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) is part of the CGIAR Independent Science and Partnership Council (ISPC) – an independent advisory body within the CGIAR system that reports to the donor members. SPIA has three broad functions in the CGIAR system: **providing public goods** to the impact assessment community (activities that will benefit the entire set of actors involved in carrying out impact assessment of the CGIAR) such as new metrics / measurement techniques for tracking adoption; **coordination**, for impact assessment activities undertaken by different actors (i.e. to have different partner institutions collect and report data using compatible methods and definitions) and in identifying important gaps in the evidence base to target those areas that are understudied; and, **synthesis and overview** by commissioning and producing synthesis and overview studies that make assessments and draw lessons learned from the evidence provided in individual studies.

SPIA comprises a Chair (currently Douglas Gollin at University of Oxford), two members (currently Bob Herdt and JV Meenakshi) and two activity leaders (Erwin Bulte and Karen Macours), all of whom contribute between 15 – 25 days per year to SPIA work. These academic leaders are supported by a small team in the Secretariat for the ISPC based at FAO in Rome (currently Tim Kelley, James Stevenson, Lakshmi Krishnan, Ira Vater) and in the field (John Ilukor, Fredric Kosmowski) and a few consultants.

1.2. Overview of Strengthening Impact Assessment in the CGIAR (SIAC) project

The SIAC project proposal was drafted in the summer of 2012 and was funded through two sources. An initial bilateral grant in December 2012 to Bioversity International (now administered through the CGIAR Consortium in Montpellier), acting as a fiscal agent for SPIA, which is not a legal entity, for \$4.9 million USD came from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. DFID, having long planned to match the initial grant with their own bilateral grant, instead decided in early 2013 to put their financial contribution to the project through Window 1 of the CGIAR Fund as a special project. The funding was to go to FAO to be managed by the ISPC Secretariat. Window 1 funds were finally received in June 2014 after a long process of setting up the systems needed in the ISPC Secretariat to manage the grant.

The overall project goal is to contribute to poverty reduction, food security, nutrition and health, and sustainable natural resource use by improving knowledge and understanding concerning the impacts of international agricultural research.

The SIAC project is structured around four objectives which, in turn, are structured as programs of work within SIAC, namely:

- Objective 1 (Methods): *Develop, pilot and verify innovative methods for collection and assembly of diffusion data*
- Objective 2 (Outcomes): *Institutionalize the collection of the diffusion data needed to conduct critical CGIAR impact evaluations.*
- Objective 3 (Impacts): *Assess the full range of impacts from CGIAR research*
- Objective 4 (Building a community of practice): *Support the development of communities of practice for ex post impact assessment within the CGIAR and between the CGIAR and the development community more broadly.*

A series of activities are organized under each of these objectives. The project has been implemented according to the originally planned activities for the most part, but also adjusting and reallocating resources to react to problems or respond to new opportunities as the case may be. Much of the work has been subject to competitive bidding through open calls for proposals. SPIA is currently planning a second phase of the project to begin in mid-2017, with a re-prioritized set of activities. While the evaluation team will be working, SPIA will in parallel be sketching out plans for future work for a proposal to be considered by the new CGIAR System Council in the Fall of 2016.

The SIAC project is managed by the SPIA Secretariat (three staff members with total of 2.25 FTE as well as consultant contributions). A major sub-grant is given to the Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics (AFRE) at Michigan State University (MSU) for taking the lead in the implementation of Objectives 1 and 2.

For the oversight of the project an independent Project Steering Committee (PSC) has been created. It is chaired by the SPIA Chair and includes a representative each from the SPIA secretary (secretary to the PSC), a representative of the Fund Council, an external independent expert, an observer representative from the grant recipient institution or its designate (e.g., Finance Manager at Bioversity International initially) and the Director of the IEA (also as observer).

2. Evaluation purpose and stakeholders

The evaluation is being conducted primarily in order for SPIA to demonstrate its accountability to its own donors, as well as a secondary objective which is to contribute to a better understanding of SPIA's contribution to the CGIAR. These two objectives (accountability and learning) both support the design of phase 2 of SIAC, in particular, SPIA's understanding of the relevance and effectiveness of its contribution across eight areas of potential future focus. The evaluation will draw lessons and make recommendations that will inform the second phase of SIAC and, more generally, advise on future directions of SPIA.

The main stakeholders in the evaluation are: CGIAR donors and particularly the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and DFID; SPIA members and Secretariat, the ISPC; sub-grantees of the SIAC program at universities and CGIAR Centers; and the wider community of leaders of the CGIAR Research Programs (CRP leaders) and researchers.

3. Evaluation focus, scope and questions

3.1. Focus and scope

The evaluation should cover the activities, outputs and initial outcomes (where possible) from the period Jan 2013 – June 2016. The evaluation will assess the design, relevance and performance of the SIAC project overall and of its components and will assess its governance and management institutional setting, capacity and performance. This will include looking at the adequacy of the human and financial resources of the project (Team and sub-contractors), the role of SPIA and the PSC with respect to strategic and operational guidance and oversight. However, the evaluation will not assess the role and functioning of SPIA in relation to the ISPC and the CGIAR. .

3.2. Main questions

The main questions for the evaluation relate to the standard IEA evaluation criteria, namely:

Relevance and project design

- How relevant is SIAC for SPIA's mission and the agenda of the CGIAR?
- To what extent does SIAC address the demand for reliable information on impact from donors?
- How appropriate is SIAC's strategy to address the need for strengthened impact assessment in and of the CGIAR?
- How appropriate is the balance between developing methods and applying them?

Quality of science

- Do the methods developed under SIAC reflect state of the art quality of science?
- Are the impact assessments and technical studies being carried out under SIAC of high quality?

Effectiveness

- To what extent have outputs been produced as planned under each Objective?
- Has the program made appropriate adjustments (in terms of activities and management) in response to changed circumstances?
- To what extent has there been progress towards meeting the four Objectives of SIAC and which activities have contributed most?
- What are the main enabling as well as constraining factors which explain the project's achievements (or lack of)?

Governance and management

- Are the human and financial resources of the project adequate?
- To what extent has the PSC been effective as a mechanism for guidance and oversight?
- To what extent have the partnership arrangements with regard to subcontracting project components been efficient and effective?

4. Evaluation approach and methods

The evaluation should be a balance of summative and formative assessments. The documents that will provide the major evidence base for the evaluation will be provided by the ISPC Secretariat (e.g., LOAs,

minutes of PSC meetings, progress reports, workshop summaries). Consultation with internal (within the management of the project) and external stakeholders will supplement this, as well as evidence from a number of additional methods.

The principle of triangulation of evidence should guide the methodology. The specific methods to be used should include:

- Document review
- Structured and semi-structured interviews (internal and external stakeholders)
- Comparative analysis of other initiatives to strengthen impact assessment in other international organizations
- In-depth analysis of two specific project components (to be discussed and agreed with ISPC Secretariat)

These data should be analyzed qualitatively by members of the evaluation team. The main limitations of the evaluation are the limited time to complete the evaluation, and the small team. Judgements about effectiveness may be difficult for many components of the project as data on use are not yet available. Furthermore, work is still in progress – the SIAC project is now scheduled to be completed by mid-2017 but some final reports from sub-grantees will not be received until the end of 2017.

5. Organization and timing

5.1. Timeline and different phases

Phase	Period	Main activities and outputs	Responsibility
Preparatory Phase	May	Terms of Reference Evaluation team recruited Ad-hoc Expertise required identified	IEA and SPIA
Inception phase	June	Refine approach/methodology	Evaluation Team Leader
Inquiry phase	Jun-Jul	Interviews, desk review etc.	Evaluation Team
Reporting phase	Aug		
Drafting of Report		Draft Evaluation Report Consultation on the draft	Evaluation team
Final Evaluation Report		Final Evaluation Report	Team leader, IEA and SPIA

5.2. Team composition

The team is led by Julia Compton (Independent evaluation consultant), with support from Timothy Dalton (Kansas State University). This two-person team may be supported by an expert panel on specific tasks. Neither evaluation team member had any direct involvement in the design or implementation of SIAC.

Julia Compton’s background is in agricultural research and rural development, predominantly in Africa. She worked for ten years in the UK Department for International Development, first as a rural livelihoods adviser, and eventually as deputy head of evaluation. Since leaving DFID she has worked as

an independent consultant specialising in evaluation, agriculture and food security and rural development. Julia recently led the evaluation of the CGIAR Research Programme on Agriculture, Nutrition and Health. Julia Compton brings to this evaluation a broad institutional perspective on the CGIAR, together with experience in working closely with CGIAR stakeholders to produce a well-evidenced and independent evaluation that is useful and decision-focused.

Timothy Dalton has extensive experience in agricultural technology adoption and his research focuses on the relationship between agricultural production, technological change and the environment. Timothy Dalton complements Julia Compton's institutional perspective and evaluation skills with his technical expertise on impact assessment as well as a strategic perspective on the use of impact assessment in decision-making. His background is in agricultural economics. He is familiar with the CGIAR and has worked with FAO, USAID and USDA especially in the context of Africa. He is currently the Director of the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Collaborative research on Sorghum and Millet at Kansas State University.

5.3. Roles and responsibilities

IEA is responsible for commissioning the consultants to carry out the work, and should be the primary liaison with them to ensure progress towards delivery on the timetable outlined in the table above. IEA will also be responsible for quality assurance of the process and outputs of the evaluation. The Head of IEA will manage the evaluation in consultation with SPIA. An IEA Evaluation Analyst will also support the team in data collection and provide inputs to their analysis.

SPIA (Members and Secretariat staff) commit to making all documents on the SIAC project available to the consultants in a Dropbox; will highlight a small sub-set of documentary evidence as being of highest priority for evaluation; and will respond to questions as soon as possible throughout the course of the evaluation.

The **evaluation team leader** has final responsibility for the evaluation report and all findings and recommendations, subject to adherence to CGIAR evaluation standards.

5.4. Evaluation report

The report should be well structured, logical, clear and coherent. The findings of the evaluation report should reflect systematic analysis and be substantiated by evidence. The conclusions should reflect reasonable judgments based on findings and substantiated by evidence, and provide insights pertinent to the object and purpose of the evaluation.

The evaluation report should be structured as follows:

- Executive summary
- Main findings
- Conclusions
- Recommendations: a) to SPIA Members and Secretariat; b) to SIAC project donors

The report should be no longer than 30 pages. Information on methods (e.g. list of documents consulted, list of interviews conducted, etc) should be included in an annex.