

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Evaluation of Partnerships in CGIAR

APRIL 2016



Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement

1. Background

1.1. Introduction

CGIAR is a global agricultural research partnership that supports 15 International Agricultural Research Centers and is funded by CGIAR members from governments, foundations and development agencies. In 2008, CGIAR entered a reform to enhance the engagement between stakeholders in international agricultural research for development and to focus CGIAR's attention to major development challenges. The objectives of the reform included integrating the work of the Centers and enhancing collaboration with partners. Research is now implemented by the Centers and their partners through CGIAR Research Programs (CRP). Research 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]), strategic objectives and results. The current SRF was approved in April 2015 for the period 2016-2030.¹ It identifies three SLOs: i) reduced rural poverty; ii) improved food and nutrition security for health; and iii) improved natural resources systems and ecosystems services. Research is financed through CGIAR Fund contributions to the CRPs (Windows 1 and 2 funding) or to the Centers (Window 3) and bilaterally to Center projects.

The Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA) based in Rome, is responsible for independent external evaluations of CGIAR, including evaluation of CRPs, cross-cutting themes and CGIAR system and its governing institutions. Following completion of the evaluations of all CRPs, one of the thematic evaluations is the evaluation of partnerships in CGIAR. This evaluation will be conducted at a time when the first phase of CRPs is coming to an end, approval of proposals is ongoing for the second phase to start in 2017, and CGIAR is going through governance transition.

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<https://library.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10947/3865/CGIAR%20Strategy%20and%20Results%20Framework.pdf>

1.2. Partnerships in CGIAR

Introduction

Since 2000, CGIAR has undergone major reforms. They have all had in common the general objectives to enhance CGIAR's relevance to major development challenges, to improve integration of research among the Centers and partners and to open up CGIAR better to fulfill the expectations from partnerships. One of the main purposes in the latest reform initiated in 2008 was to engage CGIAR in partnerships that are more effective. With the reform, the concept of partnerships has become central to the modus operandi of CGIAR.² The reform was based on three core principles that all relate to partnerships: impact on the system-level outcomes; integration across CGIAR core competencies, and; appropriate partnerships at the different stages of research for development.³

The current SRF emphasizes how critical partnerships are for the achievement of CGIAR's goals and defines as one of the new elements in CGIAR's operations: "seeking out selected strategic partnerships, including public-private partnerships that add value and leverage new sources of funding". It lays out the principles for partnerships as: common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication and backbone support.

In 2002 with the establishment of the Science Council, CGIAR allocated central advisory role regarding partnerships to this science advisory body. One of the tasks of the Science Council was to foster partnerships with the wider scientific community for the benefit of an international agricultural research agenda. With the reform, the Independent Science and Partnership Council (ISPC) continues to serve in an advisory role regarding partnerships.

Since the reform, CGIAR structure has also included the Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD) as a main partnership event coordinated by the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) for periodic consultation on CGIAR research strategy, CRP portfolio and research prioritization.⁴

Recent evolution regarding partnership in CGIAR

Over the years, the System has introduced various partnership initiatives. These have included System-wide programs in late 1990s that were intended to strengthen inter-Center collaboration and partnering with the NARS; Challenge Programs in early 2000 that were aimed at introducing a programmatic approach to CGIAR and widening partnerships; and the current CGIAR Research Programs that implement the programmatic multi-partner approach on the entire CGIAR agenda.

CGIAR Centers have always worked with different types of partners, some mainly for research collaboration and others, at national and regional levels, oriented towards delivery and impact. In

² Horton et al. 2009. Perspectives on partnership: A literature review. International Potato Center (CIP), Lima, Peru. Working Paper 2009-3. 111 p.

³ <http://www.cgiar.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/CG-strategy-16pp-21-jul-2011.pdf>

⁴ GCARD3 has been a two year process coordinated jointly by GFAR and the CGIAR Consortium that has included stakeholder consultation events at the national and regional level, with a global event in Johannesburg in April 2016.

In addition to bilateral partnerships, CGIAR Centers have facilitated networks, particularly around commodities, engaged in collaborative activities with development agencies and, more recently, engaged in multi-stakeholder platforms. Initially in becoming partners in the CRPs, each Center brought to the program its own set of partners. CRPs have been requested to consolidate their research portfolio and define theories of change as part of outcome orientation, including defining their partners along the pathway from research to development impact. Attention has been given, on one hand, to defining partnerships for expanding CGIAR's sphere of competence in scientific areas where it does not have sufficient internal capacity, and advanced research institutes (including universities) can bring additional skills and strengthen quality of science in a CRP. On the other hand, partnerships are established along the impact pathway for delivery, diffusion and impact.

The number and type of partnerships varies a great deal among CRPs. The number of Centers participating in each CRP varies from primarily one Center to all Centers; CRPs describe a vastly different number of partners from their immediate partnerships to a cascading structure of partners along the impact pathway. Some CRPs involve external partners also in their core management team.

2. Evaluation purpose and stakeholders

The primary purpose of this thematic evaluation is to assess the extent to which the intentions of the reform have been realized. Acknowledging that expectations set by different stakeholder groups for partnerships may vary, the evaluation will assess the extent to which there is satisfaction among stakeholder groups on partnerships in CGIAR analyzing the underlying causes and variances. The evaluation will provide evaluative evidence and lessons on partnerships modalities; how well they have fulfilled their objectives, what have been the drivers of success and what have been constraints. The evaluation will formulate recommendations to CRPs and Centers collectively, and to the System governing bodies on ways to improve the systemic incentives, structures and strategies for enhancing efficiency, effectiveness and accountability related to partnerships, in order to improve the overall development and delivery of results towards CGIAR's goals.

The main stakeholders of the evaluation will be:

- CGIAR Fund Council (System Council): for decision making on strategic direction and fund allocation
- CGIAR Consortium and Board (System Management Board): for guidance to CRPs and strategic decision making on partnerships for the whole CGIAR system
- CRP and Center management and staff: for lessons learned to increase the strategic value of the CRP partnerships
- CGIAR Centers Boards and CRP oversight bodies: for lessons learned on oversight to increase the strategic value of the CRP partnerships
- ISPC: for lessons learned regarding strategic issues on partnership at CRP and System level
- GFAR: for lessons learned on CGIAR partnerships at national and regional levels
- Partners of CGIAR: for lessons learned on CGIAR partnerships and partnering with CGIAR

3. Evaluation focus, scope and main questions

3.1. Focus and scope

The focus of this evaluation will be on partnerships at the CRP level primarily, where research for development is implemented by Centers and their partners. However, the evaluation will assess roles, strategies and contributions of CRPs and Centers as well as Consortium and donors, in terms of their influence on partnership performance. While the ISPC has a mandate related to partnerships, this evaluation will not assess the ISPC directly although its conclusions may highlight aspects at the System level relevant to the ISPC.

CGIAR partnerships are not clearly defined with common understanding of what makes a strategic partnership versus other kind of relationship. The focus of the evaluation will be mainly in external partnerships but it will also look at partnerships among Centers and CRPs. Resource partnerships (between centers/CRPs and donors) will not be covered within this evaluations. The evaluation will cover all types of partnerships irrespective of purpose and funding, from science to delivery partnerships. ..

Partnerships are evolving with increasing collaboration between public agencies and the private sector, and with actors in innovation systems and along value chains. Partnerships cover very different kinds of arrangements and relationships ranging from contracts that involve funding flows to making seed available to partners to events under common themes and interests. Furthermore, partnerships are evolving with increasing collaboration between public agencies and the private sector, and with actors in innovation systems and along value chains. This evaluation does not have the resources or remit to analyze or assess all possible types of partnerships. It will therefore clearly define its boundaries during the inception phase. It will not systematically assess second or third tier partnerships along the impact pathway and which are not directly engaging CGIAR, except possibly in case studies.

The evaluation will focus on the time span from the initiation of the CRPs until to date using lessons and experiences from the recent past preceding the reform as a reference point and for illustrating the extent of change.

It should be noted that this evaluation will be carried out in parallel with two other thematic evaluations, one on capacity development and one on gender. In defining the scope of this evaluation and throughout the evaluation, IEA and the respective teams will seek for synergies while avoiding any duplication, including in their communication with stakeholders. While this evaluation does not focus on the assessment of partnerships that have been established especially for capacity development or gender related activities, it will consider enhanced capacity and equity as potential results of partnership.

3.2. Evaluation questions

The main criteria to be addressed in this evaluation are relevance and effectiveness of partnerships in the context of the CGIAR's objectives. This will also include looking at partnership management. The evaluation will look at partnership strategies against theoretical frameworks and concepts on good practice on partnerships management. The evaluation will assess internal partnerships (among Centers and CRPs) in terms of maximizing opportunities for synergy and efficiency, and it will assess external partnerships from three perspectives:

- that of CGIAR regarding the strategic relevance of partnerships to the Theories of change; with the objective of complementing skills and competences of CGIAR Centers in addressing research issues, and enhancing the relevance, uptake and impact of CGIAR research to next users and intended beneficiaries;
- that of the external partners in terms of fulfilling their objectives regarding common goals with CGIAR;
- that of major emerging development challenges such as climate change in terms of triggering a response of multiple partners collectively addressing these challenges.

The evaluation will have a descriptive component that aims at exploring the expectations there are regarding partnerships in Centers and CRPs, donors, and external partners. This will be based on an existing typology of partners that is available in past work of the Science Council and the Consortium Office, and will be adapted to current context.

The evaluation will also explore the main drivers and incentives to establishing partnerships and identify the main constraints to strategic partnering. The evaluation will assess the roles and influence that CGIAR governing mechanisms and bodies have had in generating conditions for partnerships to prosper. This will include the influence that donor decisions and funding strategies have played in incentivizing, or not, partnerships and the role of the Consortium and its Office regarding requirements and guidance. The evaluation will also look at the way Center partnership agendas have influenced partnership performance of CGIAR.

The evaluation addresses questions listed below that are to be elaborated and prioritized by the evaluation team during the inception phase:

Internal partnerships

- To what extent has CGIAR reform helped establish incentives for inter-Center and inter-CRP partnerships and alleviate constraints to them?
- To what extent has research implementation through CRPs helped capture synergies and efficiencies among CGIAR partners?

External partnerships

- To what extent is CGIAR becoming more strategic regarding external partnerships?
- Is CGIAR adopting new forms of partnering to meet its objectives?

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- To what extent has CGIAR reform enhanced synergies and efficiency between CGIAR and external partners?
- Is CGIAR adopting new forms of partnering and new mechanisms of resourcing partnerships to meet its objectives? (includes addressing resource limitations faced by partners)
- To what extent are partnerships enhancing the objectives set for them of strengthening research on one hand and for enhancing the likelihood of effectiveness on the other hand?
- Has the reform increased the extent to which CGIAR is considered an attractive partner among potential partners that are important for CGIAR's operations and goals?
- Are partnerships well managed and supported at CRP/Center level benchmarking against good practices?
- Is CGIAR managing risks of different kinds related to partnerships (such as reputation or liability)?

In its formulation of evaluation questions, the evaluation will take into account the issues raised in recent strategic and evaluative studies, such as the 2015 ISPC strategic study⁵ and the 2014 CGIAR Mid-Term Review.⁶ Targeted stakeholder consultation, including GCARD3, will also be used to identify issues for this evaluation to address.

4. Evaluation approach and methods

The evaluation will have summative and formative aspects, with an emphasis on taking a strategic, forward looking perspective.

The evaluation will be largely desk-based relying on document review and interviews. The evaluation will use available evaluative studies, partnerships surveys and databases to the extent that these studies provide useful information. These include the ISPC strategic study, CGIAR Stakeholders Perception Survey conducted by the Consortium Office (2012) and data collected by the previous Institutional Learning and Change initiative, including data on CRP networking. The document review will also include CGIAR, Center and CRP strategic documents, and extracts from the CRP evaluations related to partnerships. CGIAR has conducted numerous reviews and studies on the topic of partnerships, which are all listed in the ISPC strategic study, and those will be consulted.

⁵ ISPC, 2015. Strategic study of good practice in AR4D partnership. Rome, Italy. CGIAR Independent Science and Partnership Council (ISPC). The study suggested potential roles that CGIAR could play in different innovation and partnerships modes. It concluded that CGIAR can increasingly act as a trusted advisor and service provider relating to the international development agenda (and the Sustainable Development Goals) while at the same time continuing to engage in basic research. It also suggests that a framework is needed to test how multi-stakeholder partnerships work and how they can be linked to impact.

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<https://library.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10947/3390/Final%20Report%20from%20the%20MTR%20Panel%20of%20the%20CGIAR%20Reform,%20October%202028.pdf?sequence=4>

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The methodology will combine quantitative and qualitative methods. Evidence will be collected across CGIAR and through in-depth case studies that are to be designed during the inception phase.

In summary, the methodology will consist of the following:

- **Synthesis** of evaluative information on partnerships available (especially from the CRP evaluations)
- **Desk review** of key partnership strategic documents of CGIAR, partnership strategies, evaluative studies, CRP annual reports and other reference documents
- **Mapping of partnerships** for the CRPs (indicative typology rather than comprehensive mapping will be used as a basis for sampling)
- **Interviews** with CRP and Center management, different types of partners and other key stakeholders
- **Face-to-face consultation** limited to specific events, such as GCARD3
- **Case studies** for exploring specific aspect or modalities of partnerships and evaluation questions.

The evaluation process will ensure that in developing findings, conclusions and recommendations a representative range of viewpoints is captured from stakeholders through broad consultation. All findings are informed by evidence through triangulation whenever possible, and objectivity is pursued in the analysis of evidence and drawing conclusions.

Main limitations to the evaluation

Given the large number of partnerships at different levels in CGIAR, the evaluation will not be able to either describe the status of partnerships in a comprehensive manner, or assess the value and success of partnerships systematically. While the study will benchmark its findings against available survey data where appropriate, it is not intended to form a baseline for future. It will be critical for the evaluation to establish a framework for analyzing partnerships. Sampling and case study selection need to facilitate efficient use of resources and purposeful design of the evaluation for yielding as representative and relevant evidence as possible. The vast spread of partners globally and regionally, and the lack of comprehensive databases with partner information may affect the representativeness of partners that the evaluation can contact for interviews. This will need to be taken into account in the evaluation design. The evaluation also needs to be cautious not to put undue burden on Centers and CRPs requesting data and information.

5. Organization and timing

5.1. Timeline and different phases

A team of three, including team leader will carry out this evaluation. The evaluation is scheduled to take place between April and December 2016 and it will include the following several phases as shown in Table 1.

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Table 1. Schedule and phases of the evaluation in 2016

Phase	Period	Main outputs	Responsibility
Preparatory Phase	Jan – Mar	Terms of Reference Evaluation team recruited Expert Panel engaged	IEA
Inception Phase	Apr - Jun	Inception Report	Team leader and IEA
Inquiry phase	Jul – Sep	Studies and analysis products as defined in inception report	Evaluation team
Presentation of preliminary findings	Oct	Presentation of preliminary findings Feedback from main stakeholders	Evaluation team IEA
Reporting phase	Oct – Dec		
Drafting of Report	Oct – Nov	Draft Evaluation Report	Evaluation team
Final Evaluation Report	Dec	Final Evaluation Report	Team leader and IEA

Preparatory phase

During the Preparatory Phase the IEA, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, will collect and review key documents and define broadly the scope and issues for the evaluation, as follows:

- Finalize the Terms of Reference
- Collect preliminary documentation for desk review on partnerships (especially partnership strategies)
- Identify existing evaluation material relevant to partnerships
- Prepare a synthesis of the assessment of partnerships in the recent CRP evaluations
- Select the evaluation team leader and in consultation with her/him, the evaluation team and contract all team members;
- Liaise with evaluation stakeholders and identify mechanisms for consulting with them during the evaluation process;
- Select members to a resource panel and prepare Terms of Reference for them.

Inception phase

The inception phase is the responsibility of the Evaluation Team Leader in collaboration with IEA. The evaluation's scope, focus, approaches and methods will be refined during the inception phase. The evaluation questions will be elaborated and prioritized. The tasks during the inception phase include:

- Review and synthesis of CGIAR information on partnerships;
- Development of an analytical framework for the evaluation and methodology, including case studies;
- Refinement of the evaluation questions and an evaluation matrix that identifies means of addressing the questions, including an outline of the data collection methods and instruments;
- Identification of groups of interlocutors and institutions, internal and external to CGIAR, and preliminary list of interviewees;

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- Detailed specification of the evaluation timetable, including a plan for consultation with stakeholders, and any visits, including team meetings;
- 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 that, 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 during evaluation implementation in the light of experience.

Inquiry phase

The inquiry phase will follow the evaluation plan as specified in the inception report. It will focus on collecting data and information as per the evaluation design, analysis of the evidence and formulation of preliminary findings.

Reporting and dissemination phase

See 5.4.

5.2. Team composition

The Evaluation will be carried out by a team of three independent experts. The Evaluation Team Leader will have solid experience in leading complex evaluations and will be familiar with issues relating to partnerships in the agricultural research and development context.

He/she will be supported by a team of two experts and together they will have extensive and proven experience in agricultural research for development at international level on issues related to:

- Partnerships in agricultural research, especially in development context
- Partnerships in the international development arena
- Strategic management of partnerships
- Institutions in agricultural research, especially the national research organizations and networks, private-public sector partnerships and multi-stakeholder partnerships;

5.3. Evaluation governance/roles and responsibilities

The **evaluation team leader** has final responsibility for the evaluation report and all findings and recommendations, subject to adherence to CGIAR evaluation standards. The evaluation team leader is responsible for submitting the deliverables as outlined below.

The **IEA** will be responsible for planning, initial design and management of the evaluation. An IEA Senior Evaluation Officer will manage the evaluation and an IEA Evaluation Analyst will support the team in coordination, information gathering and providing inputs to analysis.

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The IEA will also be responsible for quality assurance 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.

A **resource panel** will be set up to act as sounding board representing different and broader experience and expertise in agricultural research for development partnerships than is possible to cover in a small evaluation team. The resource panel has no oversight role in the evaluation. It will be consulted for issues, ideas and feedback at different stages of the evaluation, particularly in finalizing the inception report and draft report.

5.4. Deliverables and dissemination of findings

The **Inception Report** builds on the evaluation ToR and outlines the evaluation team's approach to the evaluation. It constitutes the plan for conducting the evaluation by: (i) further defining the scope of the evaluation and determining the boundaries of the evaluation; (ii) defining the main evaluation questions; (iii) outlining the methods and tools that will be used and (iv) providing a detailed work plan for the evaluation, including team member responsibilities.

The **Evaluation Report** is the main output of the evaluation. It will present the findings, conclusions, and recommendations, based on the evidence collected during the inquiry phase. The recommendations will be informed by evidence, clearly formulated, strategically relevant and targeted to specific stakeholders in CGIAR for guidance and action. The main findings and recommendations will be summarized in an executive summary.

Presentations will be given by the team leader for disseminating the report its findings to targeted audiences, as agreed with the IEA. The form of these presentations will be planned during the inception phase.

The IEA will interact with the main stakeholders (The System Council, The System Management Board, the ISPC and the System Administrative Office) for development of a **system-wide response**. In such a response, action items could be identified for addressing recommendations that may be specifically targeted to specific bodies of the System or collectively across System actors. As the CGIAR is undergoing a governance reform, the details about the response on the report will be decided at a later stage. The new System Council will be the ultimate recipient of the evaluation report and the response.

The evaluation report and the response will be public documents made available to the System Council. A dissemination strategy will be developed during the evaluation process and it will also depend on the results of the governance reform.