

# Exploring Options for an Independent Evaluation Arrangement for the CGIAR

Workshop held on January 20, 2010 in Washington DC

## Summary notes

### 1. Introduction

At the 2009 CGIAR Business Meeting the group endorsed a new M&E Framework for the CGIAR. A critical element of the framework is the establishment of an independent evaluation arrangement (IEA) to avoid conflicts of interest. Its design and governance should be in accordance with international best practice and follow standards of “independence” as defined by the OECD/DAC Network of Development Evaluation, based on guidance provided by the Fund Council in consultation with the Consortium Board.

The independent evaluation arrangement would be primarily responsible for

- (i) independent evaluations of Mega Programs and/or cross-cutting themes focusing on the extent to which MP outputs and outcomes are likely to achieve, or have achieved, stated objectives, and which may inter alia validate findings of Consortium-commissioned evaluations, and
- (ii) independent evaluation of the CGIAR Partnership as a whole commissioned by a Joint Fund Council/Consortium Reference Group.

The workshop brought together representatives of CGIAR funders, the Consortium, and evaluation experts from both the development and research sector to jointly explore key principles, considerations and options for an independent evaluation arrangement for the new CGIAR.

### 2. Presentations

Three presentations were made at the beginning of the workshop to help frame the discussion.

- **The M&E Framework for the new CGIAR and the role of an independent evaluation arrangement**  
Maria Iskandarani (CGIAR Secretariat) provided an overview of the new CGIAR M&E framework and particularly described the evaluation responsibilities of the future independent evaluation arrangement.
- **Principles and good practices in evaluation – the IEG experience**  
Cheryl Gray (Director of the Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank) shared with the group key practices in assuring the independence of an evaluation function, described advantages and disadvantages of two evaluation approaches typically used in

the area of development – objective-based evaluation and impact evaluation, and shared some views on how to build an evaluation process.

- **Key attributes of research evaluation systems in the US and Europe**  
Susan Cozzens (Professor at the School of Public Policy, Georgia Institute of Technology) spoke about key attributes of research evaluation systems in the US and Europe. Her presentation is attached in annex 2.

### **3. Key areas of discussion**

#### **Dimensions of “Independence” related to evaluation**

- Reporting line and performance evaluation of leader and staff;
- Source and approval process for budget;
- Freedom to hire and fire
- Quality assurance
- Scope of mandate (i.e. IEA should be free in its selection of the subjects/topics/areas of evaluation)

#### **Characteristics for strong Leadership in the evaluation function**

- Strong advocate for evaluation, strong credentials in science and evaluation
- Credibility
- Independence – i.e. selection, performance evaluation, and direct reporting line to the governance body (i.e. Fund Council),

#### **Evaluation approaches**

- Objective-based evaluation is typically used in field of development assistance,
- Impact evaluation
- In research, the peer review approach is typically used to assess the quality of research as distinct from its results or
- IEA should aim to effectively combine the above approaches

#### **Validation role of the IEA**

- According to the M&E framework the IEA will be responsible for “independent evaluations of Mega Programs and/or cross-cutting themes focusing on the extent to which MP outputs and outcomes are likely to achieve, or have achieved, stated objectives, and which may inter alia **validate findings of Consortium-commissioned evaluations**”

- “Validation” would involve: screening/assessment of Consortium-commissioned evaluations for their quality, synthesizing the findings; it could also involve verification of findings on a sample basis
- Validation also refers to assessing whether the recommendations of the Consortium-commissioned evaluations sufficiently are evidence based
- Validation of the MP component evaluations should be done soon after the evaluation report is released, rather than waiting until the independent MP evaluation is being conducted. Validation thus becomes an ongoing function of the IEA.

### **Staffing of the IEA**

- In-house staff with both technical expertise in social and natural sciences and expertise in evaluation
- Consultants for review panels – that demonstrate either technical expertise and sound evaluation experiences
- In-house staff would primarily manage the evaluations and be responsible for the “validation” work of evaluation products to be used by the panels

### **Quality assurance of evaluations – possible instruments**

- peer-review/ reference groups
- through establishment of standards and monitoring of compliance

### **Location of IEA**

- the IEA needs a “physical home”
- criteria discussed in the selection of the location are: efficiency; avoidance of isolation from other components of the system and the scientific community; location must not compromise independence, and should minimize opportunities for external influence
- the research evaluation function should be well connected with the scientific community
- “co-location” with ISPC/SPIA is being considered by some participants as valuable as it may imply efficiency gains and facilitate knowledge exchange with respect to issues and trends in agricultural research
- other participants had concerns about the idea of co-location with ISPC as it may risk compromising the necessary “fire wall” between IEA and the ISPC since the ISPC advises the CGIAR on activities that will eventually be evaluated by the IEA.
- discussion attempted to tease out what is exactly meant by “Co-location with ISPC”: Would staff of the IEA be administratively mapped to the ISPC Secretariat? Would the ISPC Sec and IEA have staff in common? Or would IEA have its own offices based on a separate agreement with FAO? Would IEA be FAO staff or rather hosted by FAO similar to the Alliance Office or the GFAR Secretariat? These are critical details in ensuring independence while physically co-locating ISPC and IEA. There are certain trade-offs that need to be weight when looking at the various options.

- the option of locating the IEA with the Fund Office at the World Bank was also proposed; some participants considered that there may be a (perceived) conflict of interest issue as the World Bank as the host already fulfills a number of function in the CGIAR, namely Trustee, Member of the Fund Council and host of the Fund Office.

#### 4. Workshop “Vision” for the Independent Evaluation Arrangement

The workshop participants sketched out a number of options for operationalizing the IEA based on a number of principles and functions discussed during the event. The following describes an initial set of characteristics of an IEA that are being considered critical by the group. More thinking and discussions will be necessary for arriving at a more comprehensive description of a future IEA.

##### Principles

Independence, competence and quality assurance, consultation and learning, and simplicity (please see discussion note in annex 3)

##### Mission

“To serve the research for development mission of the CGIAR through high quality evaluation”

##### Functions

- **Develop a CGIAR Evaluation Policy** in consultation with Consortium and other Stakeholders
- **Manage the independent evaluations of Mega Programs** and/or cross-cutting themes focusing on the extent to which MP outputs and outcomes are likely to achieve, or have achieved, stated objectives, and which may inter alia validate findings of Consortium-commissioned evaluations, and
- **Manage the independent evaluation of the CGIAR Partnership** as a whole to be commissioned periodically by a Joint Fund Council/Consortium Reference Group.
- **Validate Consortium-commissioned evaluation products** and other potential self-evaluations that can be used as inputs for the independent evaluation of MPs and cross-cutting issues. This involves (i) screening of Consortium-commissioned evaluations for their quality, (ii) synthesizing the findings, (iii) confirming that recommendations of the Consortium-commissioned evaluations are evidence based, and finally (iv) verification of findings on a sample basis in the field.
- **Manage roster of technical experts and evaluators**
- **Effectively communicate evaluation findings to stakeholders in order to promote learning and knowledge building**

It is also being suggested that the **evaluation and the impact assessment function for the CGIAR should be combined under the umbrella of ONE arrangement**, but each with dedicated budget line items. Impact assessment is commonly considered as one form of evaluation and is one component of the evaluation path.

## **Approach to evaluation of research for development**

IEA should aim at a combination of approaches: (i) objective-based evaluation, (ii) impact evaluation and (iii) research evaluation approaches. Objective-based evaluations and impact evaluation are common practice in program evaluation for the purpose of accountability. Research evaluation is typically peer-review based and uses special data and output measures (e.g. publications, citations). It can be both formative and summative in nature. In a research for development context both is critical – accountability for results and the advancement of scientific excellence.

## **Leadership**

The Leadership of the IEA should serve as strong advocate for sound evaluation in the CGIAR. The person should have a scientific background with strong evaluation credentials.

The leadership of the IEA should be recruited by the Fund Council. The person should be in place by the end of the year and start establishing the evaluation function (i.e. recruitment of staff, development of work plan, and engagement with Consortium to lead the development of a CGIAR evaluation policy)

## **Organizational models**

### **Model 1 – Independent Evaluation Office**

- a. **Head of the office is an Evaluation Chair (~25%)**, who would be a strong advocate for evaluation and has a track record in both science and evaluation. The Chair would predominantly have an advocacy and representational role. The person would be selected by the Fund Council and report to the Fund Council. The Head would be supported by a full-time Chief Evaluator and 1-2 professionals with technical expertise in social or natural sciences and strong evaluation credentials, and one administrative assistant
- b. **Head of office is a Director of the Evaluation Office / Chief Evaluator (100%)**, who would be a strong advocate for evaluation and has a track record in both science and evaluation. The full-time head would have both a representational and managerial role. The person would be selected by the Fund Council and report to the Fund Council.

He/She would be supported by 2-3 professionals with technical expertise in social or natural sciences and strong evaluation credentials, and one administrative assistant.

## **Model 2 – Independent Evaluation and Impact Assessment Office**

In this model the evaluation and impact assessment function would be combined and provided by one office.

- a. **Head of the office is an Evaluation and Impact Assessment Chair (~25%),** who would be a strong advocate for evaluation and a track record in both science and evaluation. The Chair would predominantly have an advocacy and representational role. The person would be selected by the Fund Council and report to the Fund Council. The Head would be supported by a full-time Chief Evaluator and 2-3 professionals with technical expertise in social or natural sciences and strong evaluation credentials, and one administrative assistant. Impact assessment would have a specially assigned budget.
- b. **Head of unit is a Director of the Evaluation Office / Chief Evaluator (100%),** who **would** be a strong advocate for evaluation and a track record in both science and evaluation. The full-time head would have both a representational and managerial role. The person would be selected by the Fund Council and report to the Fund Council. Supported by 3-4 professionals with technical expertise in social or natural sciences and strong evaluation credentials, and one administrative assistant. Impact assessment would have a specially assigned budget.

## **Location**

**There was consensus among the workshop participants that an independent evaluation unit for the CGIAR should be housed by another organization rather than being free standing.**

Criteria for the selection of the location should be

- efficiency considerations
- not isolated from other components of the system and the scientific community;
- location must not compromise independence;
- minimization of opportunities for influence

### **Location Option 1: FAO**

- The Independent Evaluation Office would be hosted by FAO and would have a separate administrative agreement with the host organization ensuring that its independence is not compromised

**Location Option 2: World Bank**

- The Independent Evaluation Office would be hosted by the World Bank and would have a separate administrative agreement with the host organization ensuring that its independence is not compromised

Option 2, however, was seen as being problematic due to a perceived conflict of interest of the World Bank when taking up this hosting role in addition to the Trust Fund and the Fund Office.

## Annex 1: List of participants

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>e-mail</b>
1	Byerlee, Derek	SC/SPIA	dbyerlee@gmail.com
2	Cooksy, Leslie	University of Delaware	<a href="mailto:ljcooksy@udel.edu">ljcooksy@udel.edu</a>
3	Cozzens, Susan	Georgia Tech University	susan.cozzens@pubpolicy.gatech.edu
4	Echeverria, Ruben	CIAT	ruben.echeverria@cgiar.org
5	Elliott, Victoria	Consultant	velliott@worldbank.org
6	Fischer, Ken	Science Council	k.fischer@cgiar.org
7	Frison, Emile	Bioversity	e.frison@cgiar.org
8	Gerrard, Chris	IEG	CGerrard@worldbank.org
9	Gray, Cheryl	IEG	CGray@worldbank.org
10	Immonen, Sirkka	Science Council Sec	Sirkka.Immonen@fao.org
11	Iskandarani, Maria	CGIAR Sec	miskandarani@worldbank.org
12	Martin, Ladislau	Embrapa	Ladislau.Martin@ARS.USDA.GOV
13	Mostafa, Iftikhar	CGIAR Sec	imostafa@worldbank.org
14	Soule, Meredith	USAID	MSoule@usaid.gov
15	Wadsworth, Jonathan	DfID	J-Wadsworth@dfid.gov.uk
16	Wang, Ren	CGIAR Sec	<a href="mailto:rwang@worldbank.org">rwang@worldbank.org</a>
17	Zazueta, Aaron	GEF Evaluation Office	<a href="mailto:azazueta@thegef.org">azazueta@thegef.org</a>

# Key Attributes of Research Evaluation Systems in the United States and Europe

Susan Cozzens  
School of Public Policy  
Georgia Institute of Technology

Prepared for “Exploring Options for and  
Independent Evaluation Arrangement for the  
CGIAR,” workshop at the World Bank, January  
20, 2010

# Research program evaluation

- Not a branch of general program evaluation, but rather a somewhat independent development
- Major differences
  - Dominant use of peer review
  - Specialized data and measures (outputs)
- However, many issues shared
  - Both formative and summative
  - Design and evidence base
  - Choice of evaluators
  - Independence

# Evaluation levels

- Project – largely prospective, with reporting, except for very large grants
- Public laboratory
  - Longstanding regular review systems.
  - Standardization through criteria and rating scales is on the increase.
- Program (collection of projects)
  - The larger the grants, the more likely the program is to be evaluated retrospectively.
  - Systematic data inputs have been increasing.
- Agency or system level reviews
  - More in Europe than in the U.S., unless you count performance indicator systems.

# Examples

- US
  - NIST reviews
  - NIOSH evaluations
  - NOAA Sea Grant Program
  - Engineering Research Centers (NSF-ERC)
  - NSF GPRA panel
- Europe
  - National program reviews: Department of Health (UK); Energy Program (Sweden)
  - Norwegian Research Council
  - Danish review of GTS Institute System
  - FP6 Evaluation at the European Commission

## Independence – the textbook answer

- Requested by and reports to at least one level up from the body being evaluated
- Done at arms length
- By people with no conflict of interest

## What makes a review credible?

- Who asks for and receives it
- Expertise of panel
  - Technical expertise
  - Evaluation expertise
  - Stakeholder participation
- Solid information base
  - Internal data
  - External data
  - Comparative data
- Independence

# Commissioning

- U.S. examples
  - NSF Engineering Research Centers evaluation – required by National Science Board procedures
  - NSF GPRA panel – required by law, reports to Director
  - NOAA Sea Grant – advisory board develops structure and rating scales
  - NIST – director commissions reviews annually; NRC chooses committees and published results
- European examples
  - Agency programs – department level requests
  - Research council and institute system reviews – requested by “Government”
  - Evaluation of FP6 – required by law, reports to top management of Directorate General

## Who reviews?

- “Independent, external evaluators”
  - E.g., NHS R&D Funding project
    - Program data
    - 28 interviews
  - Previous reviews of energy programs in Sweden
    - 10 out of 30 done by consultants
  - External evaluator also used in NSF ERC evaluation
    - along with expert review and Congressionally mandated management review

## Panels are more common

- Technical expertise
- Mix of skills
- Relatively free of conflict of interest
  - At least, it must be declared
  - International participation often the majority for national programs
  - Stakeholder groups should be represented
- Keep some deliberation open but committee deliberations should be closed

## In the examples...

- Sea Grant
  - No one funded under the state program being reviewed serves on the panel, but directors of other programs do
  - Program staff also staff the reviews
- NIOSH – stakeholders strongly represented on the panels
- NIST
  - Panelists chosen by NRC, outside NIST labs
- Danish Institutes
  - A mix of Danes and other Nordic members
- FP6 evaluation
  - Panel included several professional evaluators

## Information base

- Self-study is widely considered a very important input.
  - NIOSH – info gathering, logic models
- Previous evaluations may be rolled up.
  - Two major programs evaluated under FP6.
- Hearings and interviews
  - May be important in hearing from stakeholder groups

## More information base

- Background studies may be commissioned.
  - For Danish GTS, five-nation comparative study of institute systems
  - ERC – outside evaluators did interviews, collected data
  - For Norwegian research council, complete bibliometric profile was compiled, plus researcher, ministry, and industry perspectives were gathered with a questionnaire and interviews

## Evidence-based conclusions

- Panelists are likely to develop a *gestalt* understanding about the program
  - The higher the level of aggregation, the more this is likely to be the case.
- This is a discipline that must be maintained outside the panel as part of the process.
  - U.S. NAS reviews are a good example.

## Issues in the new CGIAR system

- Mega-program and system-level reviews are likely to draw heavily on lower level reviews done under the direction of the ISPC.
- Should probably commission some independent data collection, but this will be problematic with regard to outcomes.
- True distance from the lower level reviews could be very valuable, if well informed.
  - E.g., system-level analysis using broader indicators

## Summary observations

- Independence is valued throughout program evaluation.
- Independence in the evaluation staff does not preclude expertise in review panels.
- Formative and summative evaluations can complement each other in style and perspective.

## Annex 3 : Discussion Note

### **Exploring Principles and Options for an Independent Evaluation Arrangement for the CGIAR: A Discussion Note**

prepared by the CGIAR Secretariat

#### **1. Background**

At the 2009 CGIAR Business Meeting a new Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the new CGIAR was endorsed. It will support the successful implementation of the Strategy and Results Framework and help translate the CGIAR vision into tangible results. It reflects a new accountability framework in which the Consortium is responsible for high quality monitoring and evaluation of Centers and their contribution to the Mega Programs, and the Fund Council regularly evaluates the performance of the Consortium.

The overall M&E framework incorporates a number of decisions on the specific aspects of monitoring and evaluation (see Box 1 for the distinction between monitoring and evaluation). As noted in para 4 of the framework document, an independent evaluation arrangement will be established; its design will be finalized in 2010 and it will become operational in 2010/11 or as required. Its design and governance should be in accordance with international best practice and follow standards of “independence” as defined by the OECD/DAC Network of Development Evaluation, based on guidance provided by the Fund Council in consultation with the Consortium Board.

Two possible administrative arrangements for the new evaluation function have been suggested during discussions at the ExCo 17 meeting (November 2009): (i) a CGIAR evaluation team hosted by an international organization with a strong evaluation function (e.g. IFAD), (ii) co-locating the secretarial support to the new CGIAR evaluation function with the ISPC Secretariat at FAO.

**The intention of this note is to help frame the discussion at a workshop to be held on January 20, 2010 at the CGIAR Secretariat in Washington DC.** The workshop brings together representatives of CGIAR funders, the Consortium, and evaluation experts from both the development and research sector to jointly explore key principles, considerations and options for an independent evaluation arrangement for the new CGIAR.

#### **2. Evaluation arrangement is anchored in the new CGIAR M&E Framework**

**In accordance with the new M&E Framework, the new evaluation system** should provide periodic objective assessments of the extent to which Mega Programs and other aspects of the CGIAR are likely to or have achieved their stated objectives, as articulated in the Strategy and Results Framework and the CGIAR Joint Declaration.

The evaluation system has four key elements:

1. The Consortium Board commissions periodic *External Evaluations of Mega Program components* and/or cross-cutting issues. These evaluations feed into the independent evaluations of Mega Programs described in point 3, below.

2. The Consortium Board also commissions an *External Evaluation of each Center* every five years to evaluate its governance, management and financial health. The evaluation of Centers' programmatic performance is incorporated in the evaluation of Mega-Programs described in point 1.
3. The Fund Council commissions an *Independent Evaluation of each Mega Program* every four years focusing on the extent to which it has generated the planned outputs and outcomes and is likely to achieve, or has achieved, its stated objectives. The evaluations are implemented through an independent evaluation arrangement and may include validation of findings from external evaluations commissioned by the Consortium.
4. An *Independent Evaluation of the Partnership* is carried out every six to seven years. It is commissioned by a Reference Group constituted for the purpose, in which all relevant parties will be represented. The evaluation will assess (i) the efficacy of the Consortium, the Fund, the ISPC (including their support units), and the relationship with GCARD; and (ii) the effectiveness of the research conducted by the Partnership in light of the CGIAR Vision and Strategic Objectives.

**The new independent evaluation arrangement would be responsible for items 3 and 4 above, namely the *Independent Evaluations of Mega Programs* and the *Independent Evaluation of the Partnership*.**

**It would also play a lead role in drafting an evaluation policy and guidelines for the CGIAR system as a whole. This will involve engaging with the Consortium to develop a consistent approach to and high quality standards for all evaluation products, including the evaluations commissioned by the Consortium, as they will be a critical input into the evaluation work of the independent evaluation arrangement.**

**Box 1 : The difference between monitoring and evaluation**

**Monitoring** - A continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing (development) intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds. Monitoring is the responsibility of management.

**Evaluation** - The systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors. Evaluation is the responsibility of evaluators in consultation with management.

*Source: OECD-DAC, "Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results," Paris, 2002.*

The framework document lists the following key considerations in exploring an independent evaluation arrangement for CGIAR:

- To limit added bureaucracy;

- to leverage already established good practices and capacity in evaluation through tapping new networks of evaluation experts in agricultural research and development;
- to enhance evaluation professionalism in the CGIAR;
- to retain institutional memory and promote institutional learning;
- to stimulate methodological advancement in the evaluation of the “Research-Development Continuum”;
- to leverage potential synergies in agricultural research outcome evaluation, i.e., interventions leading to uptake of technologies and other research outputs by partners and stakeholders that are in common;
- to support harmonization of evaluation efforts in light of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action.

### **3. Stronger results-based evaluation in the new CGIAR**

Evaluation of research and evaluation of development interventions differ to some extent in their principal objectives and practices. For example research evaluation in the past has been very much of a prospective nature and retrospective evaluation has only gained importance in recent times. In many countries research evaluations are organized informally with little standardization and with a more formative character rather than a summative judgment. But there are also examples where research evaluation is very much institutionalized with highly formalized rules and procedures (e.g. UK and Australia). Typically research evaluation is peer-review-based. Attribution of development outcomes to research is another challenge that research has over development interventions, where the effect of interventions can be observed more immediately.

Over the past decade public research funding is moving away from block funding to program funding with specified outputs. New public management principles and results-based management and evaluation is being increasingly applied in research organizations – something that had entered the development assistance community much earlier. The CGIAR has now decided to embrace the concept of results-based management more fully by introducing a system-wide results frame with tangible outputs and outcomes, and by linking funding-decisions to results.

As such, and given that the CGIAR’s mission is to conduct research for development, it seems that there is merit in exploring a hybrid approach to evaluating CGIAR research for development, by linking principles and good practices from both research and development evaluation.

### **4. Guiding principles and norms for the new CGIAR independent evaluation arrangement**

The basis for designing a new evaluation function is to first reflect and agree on a set of core principles and norms to serve as guiding criteria for forming and operationalizing the evaluation function.

The following set of guiding principles and norms draws from global best practice, in particular from (i) the UNEG Standards and Norms for Evaluation in the UN System (2005), (ii) the Sourcebook for Evaluating Global and Regional Partnership Programs jointly prepared by IEG and the DAC Network on Development Evaluation (2007), and (iii) a peer-review report of the GEF independent evaluation function (2009), (iv) Whitley and Glaeser, *The Changing Governance of the Sciences* (2007) (v) Imas and Rist, *The Road to Results* (2009).

### **A. Independence**

The evaluation process should be independent from program policy making, management, and activity implementation. Such independence helps ensure that evaluation findings are impartial and credible.

“ An independent evaluation is carried out by entities and persons free of the control of those responsible for the design and implementation of the development intervention....Independence implies freedom from political influence and organizational pressure. It is characterized by full access to information and by full autonomy in carrying out investigations and reporting findings. “ (OECD 2002)

Independence in the CGIAR context has two broad dimensions: structural and behavioural.

- **Structural independence** refers to the setting of the evaluation function within the organization. In the CGIAR context, this would mean that the evaluation function does not report to, and is not directed by, the entities whose work it is evaluating, namely the Centers, the Consortium and the ISPC.

#### Issues to consider:

- To whom does the head of evaluation report ?
  - What is the evaluation unit's scope of work – what is it mandated to evaluate ? What information does it have access to ?
  - To whom, and how, are evaluation findings reported ?
  - How are evaluation staff protected from repercussions from negative findings ?
  - Who prepares and who approves the evaluation work plan?
  - Who approves the evaluation budget ?
- **Behavioural independence** relates to the evaluators' impartiality in conducting evaluation work and their “willingness and ability to issue uncompromising reports”. (Imas and Rist, 2009, p.33) It entails the absence of conflicts of interest; the ability to

retain independence of judgment, and immunity to pressure from any party to modify evaluation findings.

In the CGIAR context, this would mean that evaluators do not have a personal or institutional interest, nor a previous involvement, in the activities they are evaluating and that the evaluation entity is empowered to report on its findings without restrictions on content.

Issues to consider:

- How to ensure that the scope and design of each evaluation are professionally correct, adequately resourced, and unrestricted by outside pressures ?
- What should be the conflict of interest rules for:
  - the head of the evaluation arrangement,
  - staff of the evaluation arrangement, and
  - firms and consultants performing external evaluations on contract.
  - Specifically, may a former staff of any CGIAR member Center or a former member of the Science Council serve as an evaluator for any part of the CGIAR system and if so, what recusal rules should be developed ?
- What should be the procedures for obtaining and recording comments from the units being evaluated while eschewing any restriction on the evaluation reports ?
- What should be the disclosure policy for evaluation reports ?

***B. Consultation***

Independence does not mean isolation. The credibility of the evaluation depends on transparency and stakeholder consultation during design, implementation and reporting. Evaluations should be designed after consultation with the major stakeholders in a program, including: those whose work is being evaluated, beneficiaries of the work, outside experts, and the audience for the evaluation. Such consultations can alert evaluators to the full range of issues, claims and hypotheses that the evaluation may wish to test.

Issues to consider

- Who are the stakeholders ?
- What could be the mechanisms to institutionalize adequate stakeholder consultation?
- What degree of transparency and disclosure is expected?

***C. Competence and quality assurance***

The credibility of evaluation also depends on the expertise of the evaluators and the quality of the evaluations. This entails that

- Teams engaged in designing, conducting and managing evaluation activities should possess both (i) core evaluation competencies and qualifications (e.g. understanding of results-based management principles, logical framework analysis, utilization-focused, summative and formative evaluation, quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis) and (ii) specific technical knowledge of the subject matter under evaluation
- managers of the evaluation function ensure that the evaluation function is fully operational and that evaluation work is conducted according to the highest professional standards. Box 2 offers a comprehensive list of responsibilities considered to be key for the head of an evaluation function (UNEG, April 2005).
- Systematic quality assurance of the evaluations' design, methodology, the conduct and reporting.

#### Issues to consider

a) What competencies are needed in CGIAR results-based research program evaluation ?

- Technical competency in the subject matter being evaluated.
  - This must be obtained consistent with conflict of interests and recusal guidelines.
  - How will the technical competence of evaluators (staff or external) be assessed?
- Evaluation expertise in results-based evaluation and good understanding of results-based management principles
- Experience in evaluation management

b) What could be the mechanism for composing evaluation teams with the right competencies?

- In-house (staff)
- External consulting firms and individuals
- Joint evaluations; use of “common” reference groups for quality assurance

c) What quality assurance mechanism would be effective?

- Advisory panel to provide guidance on TOR's and help with quality assurance of draft reports
- ...

## **Box 2 : Management of the Evaluation Function - Core responsibilities of a head of evaluation**

**Standard 1.5:** The Head of evaluation has a lead role in ensuring that the evaluation function is fully operational and that evaluation work is conducted according to the highest professional standards.

Within the comprehensive institutional framework, the management of the evaluation function, entrusted to the Head of evaluation, should ensure that:

- An evaluation policy is developed and regularly updated;
- The budget for evaluations is managed in an efficient manner;
- An evaluation plan of evaluation activities is developed as part of the organisation's planning and budgeting cycle, on an annual or biannual basis. The plan should prioritize those areas most in need of evaluation, and specify adequate resources for the planning, conduct and follow-up of evaluations.
- Adequate evaluation methodologies are adopted, developed and updated frequently;
- The evaluations are conducted according to defined quality standards in a timely manner, in order to serve as a useful tool for the intended stakeholders/ users;
- Reporting to high-level management is timely and relevant to their needs, thereby supporting an informed management and policy decision-making process;
- Regular progress reports are compiled on the implementation of the evaluation plan and/ or the implementation of the recommendations emanating from the evaluations already carried out, to be submitted to the Governing Bodies and/ or Heads of organizations.
- Lessons from evaluations are distilled and disseminated as appropriate.

**Standard 1.6:** The Head of evaluation is responsible for ensuring the preparation of evaluation guidelines.

- Evaluation methodologies that should reflect the highest professional standards;
- Evaluation processes, ensuring that evaluations are conducted in an objective, impartial, open and participatory manner, based on empirically verified evidence that is valid and reliable, with results being made available;
- Ethics, ensuring that evaluations are carried out with due respect and regard to those being evaluated

**Standard 1.7:** The Head of evaluation should ensure that the evaluation function is dynamic, adapting to new developments and changing needs both within and outside the organization.

In particular, the management of the evaluation function should include:

- Raising awareness and/ or building evaluation capacity;
- Facilitation and management of evaluation networks;
- Design and implementation of evaluation methodologies and systems;
- Ensuring the maintenance of institutional memory of evaluations through user-friendly mechanisms;
- Promoting the compilation of lessons in systematic manner.

Excerpt from **UNEG Standards for Evaluation in the UN System**,  
[http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc\\_id=22](http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=22)

#### ***D. Learning and Knowledge Building***

The evaluation function is expected to contribute to decision-making and learning, as well as to accountability. This learning objective requires dedicated effort to capture and disseminate evaluation findings, and therefore clarity about the primary audiences for the evaluation

##### ***Issues to consider***

- a) Who is the primary audience of the MP evaluations and the partnership review?

For accountability:

- Fund Council
- All Funders

For learning:

- Centers
- The global research community

- b) What would be some effective mechanisms for communication/dissemination of findings to the different audiences?

#### **5. Outlook**

Embracing and then operationalizing the principles and norm described will be critical for ensuring a credible and impartial evaluation function for the CGIAR. It will set the foundation for effective use of the evaluation by the various audiences and prevent donors from requesting additional evaluations for their own specific use.

The workshop should help to further define the four principles and the other considerations listed in para 4 of the M&E framework documents in the context of the CGIAR, and from there derive options for effective “administrative” structures for the evaluation function.

## References

De Crombrugghe, Dominique et. al. (2009), The Evaluation Function of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), A Peer Review, Final Report, [http://www.thegef.org/uploadedFiles/Evaluation\\_Office/ThirdColumn/PeerReviewReport.pdf](http://www.thegef.org/uploadedFiles/Evaluation_Office/ThirdColumn/PeerReviewReport.pdf), accessed on January 5, 2010.

IEG and the DAC Network on Development Evaluation (2007), Sourcebook for Evaluating Global and Regional Partnership Programs, The World Bank, Washington DC.

Imas, Linda G. Morra and Ray C. Rist (2009), The Road to Results Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations, The World Bank, Washington DC.

OECD-DAC (2002), Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results, Paris.

United Nations Evaluation Group (2005), Standards and Norms for Evaluation in the UN System, [http://www.uneval.org/normsandstandards/index.jsp?doc\\_cat\\_source\\_id=4](http://www.uneval.org/normsandstandards/index.jsp?doc_cat_source_id=4), accessed on January 5, 2010.

Whitley, Richard and Jochen Glaeser (2007), The Changing Governance of the Sciences, The Advent of Research Evaluation Systems, Springer Dordrecht.