

**SIAC 7th Project Steering Committee (PSC) Meeting, Friday 3 October, 2014, 5:00pm Rome, Skype
Main Outcomes**

PSC Members attending: Doug Gollin, Alan Tollervey, Julian Alston, Denyse Faulkner, Tim Kelley
Observers: Maggie Gill, Mywish Maredia, James Stevenson, Ira Vater, Lakshmi Krishnan
Apologies: Greg Traxler, Rachel Bedouin

1. Approval of meeting agenda

Doug Gollin suggested that the discussion primarily center on agenda items 2, 3, 4e, 5e, and 6, leaving some additional time for discussion/inputs on overall SIAC activities and direction. The agenda was approved without amendments.

2. Follow up from previous meeting's action points (ref: PSC 6 meeting minutes)

a. Window 1 (W1) contribution to the SIAC Program *For information*

The new implementation dates (extending the SIAC program by one year, i.e., to December 2016) were approved by FC in April, thus clearing the way for first installment of W1 funds for 2014 (\$ 1,248 k), accredited to the SIAC account at FAO in June, of which to date \$ 146k has been spent. TK summarized the current status of funding and disbursements: with the FC approval that came after the PSC meeting in April 2014, currently have almost all funding anticipated for SIAC at the beginning of the project from BMGF, DFID, and CGIAR W1/W2.;

b. Meeting of the FC committee on Evaluation and Impact Assessment (FCEIA). *For information*

DG stated that there was nothing in particular during the most recent FCEIA meetings that pertained to SPIA or SIAC. AT noted that there is substantial ongoing work at the system level e.g. the Strategy and Results Framework (SRF) is being written, Mid-Term Review (MTR) is forthcoming, and new CRPs are being commissioned, and SPIA needs to be aware of the knockdown effects and the disruptions this may cause (as things are in a state of flux). The SRF would also have points relevant to IA and SPIA, or the MTR may have comments/views on this.

c. IFAD support to SIAC program *For information*

IFAD stated that their moratorium on all funding was lifted in late July/early August, and so the funding proposal for SIAC will now go through their quality assurance process. To date, SPIA has readjusted and reforecast the budget on the assumption that IFAD funding would not be forthcoming at any point in the SIAC program timeline. If IFAD funding is received, it will be for 2015 and SPIA will allocate the resources to increasing the number of projects funded under one or more of the calls for proposals that are currently active.

3. Objectives 1 and 2 activities update

MM reported on progress under Objectives 1 and 2.1 and 2.4, referring the PSC to the report on Phase 1 for details. Following the last PSC meeting decision, all contracts with CG Centers are now in place for Activity 2.1 – a number of training workshops are ongoing (NARS partners are being trained in the methodology of collecting data). All of these activities appear to be on a reasonable timetable. MM explained that one of the countries – Iran - included in the workplan involves 6 crop-by-country combinations (CCCs). MSU's export control office, however, informed MM that they don't have a license to conduct research in Iran, and will need to undergo an application with the US Trade Commission (a lengthy and expensive process). Hence, MM sought PSC approval to remove Iran from the workplan for activity 2.1 in Phase 1. and the budget be reduced reflecting the removal of 6 CCCs.

The request to remove Iran from CCCs list for activity 2.1 was approved by the PSC on a no objection basis.

MM then briefly described activities proposed under Phase II of SIAC. Some of these activities will build on Phase 1 Activity 2.1. During Phase II, random audits of collected varietal adoption data and some validation studies will be done. While MSU has not finalized the methods for validations, it will include DNA fingerprinting. The other major activity in Phase II is Activity 2.4 – this compliments the work SPIA is doing on LSMS-ISA – involving working with ongoing national survey efforts to incorporate agricultural technology adoption related questions or modules. In summary, the Phase II budget request for \$649 k focuses on Activities 1.3 (\$125 k), 1.4 (\$30 k), 2.1 (\$145 k) and 2.4 (\$215 k) over the second half of the SIAC project. Some discussion followed on activity 2.1. MG asked what is included in agricultural technology diffusion. MM responded that only crop and NRM outcomes are included. The latter is addressed under SIAC objective 1 where new methods to collect NRM diffusion data are being tested. JS added that for Activity 2.2 (NRMR outcome database), SPIA is about to issue a call for proposals based on a database of about 200 NRMR outcomes identified by a Consultant from a review of annual reports over 10 years, and PMS documents. NRMR outcomes span water management, pest management, crop management, agroforestry practices, and landscape management. TK added that the idea was to track those particular technologies that farmers have adopted that have contribution from CGIAR and NARS. This is what has been done for improved varieties, even though it isn't as simple for technologies farmers are using. JA observed that it seemed like we are approaching the adoption question from source of technologies perspective and tracing back (i.e. for the NRMR work). For improved varieties, it works the other way around – attribution to CGIAR comes after. TK responded that during Jim Ryan's (ex-SPIA Chair) time, SPIA spent a lot of time thinking about supply-led endeavor (e.g. identify research outcomes and see what policy changes have occurred) and a demand-led approach (e.g. investigate a rural policy and trace it back to CGIAR policy outcomes). But, almost every proposal they received was the former (supply-led), and they ended up looking at the supply-led approach – researchers are more familiar with the former. DG added that these were areas SPIA continues to wrestle with. In his comments to the PSC on Phase II of MSU work, DG noted that SPIA has been satisfied with the work MSU is doing – consistent with what was envisioned in the sub-contract. SPIA did raise some concerns about staffing, and these concerns were allayed with detailed comments.

The request to approve MSU Phase II Workplan and Budget was approved on a no objection basis.

4. Review of Objective 3 (Assess the full range of impacts from CGIAR research)

DG provided brief updates on progress on the following major activities:

a. *Nutrition and health impacts.*

A launch workshop was organised by SPIA at Wageningen in July, attended by 20 participants - scientists from the 5 projects selected and representatives from A4NH, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, SPIA and Wageningen. A short report from the workshop is attached to the SPIA Activity Update

b. *Long-term, large scale ex post IAs across the full range of impacts*

In early September SPIA issued a call for expressions of interest for studies that credibly document the impacts of successful CGIAR research adopted at scale and over the long term using best available methods. The call describes the aims and types of studies (deliberately left open) that might be relevant. SPIA hopes to commission about 3 or 4 large studies over the next two years.

c. *Micro-level studies.*

The first stage of the call for proposals on experimental impact evaluations of CGIAR research announced in April 2014 is completed.

21 expressions of interest were received and reviewed by Karen Macours, Doug Gollin, and SPIA Secretariat. 8 proponents have been contacted and have submitted full proposals in September. Six

external reviewers have been contacted by Karen to review 2-3 proposals each before October 2. In addition, SPIA members J.V. Meenakshi and Erwin Bulte will be requested to share their reviews of all 8 studies with Karen who will collate these reviews. Finally, SPIA Chair and Secretariat, after conducting their own portfolio review, will collaborate with Karen to come up with a set of recommendations to the PSC for discussion and consideration for approval. To ensure the PSC has sufficient time for consideration of proposals, SPIA circulated the 8 full proposals to PSC members earlier this week with a request that members review these between now and mid-October when they will be sent full reviews and SPIA's recommendations for selection.

In response to JA's question on how many proposals would be funded, DG responded that SPIA would realistically be funding 2 or 3 proposals. There is a fund envelope of about USD 900K for this activity. These are relatively expensive studies, and typically SPIA co-funds them rather than fund them fully.

- d. *IA of under-evaluated areas of CGIAR research, e.g., livestock, irrigation management, agro-forestry, policy and social sciences, NRM, etc.)*

SPIA commissioned a critical review of the IA work to-date on irrigation and water management research, broadly conceived: e.g., including much of IWMI's research, IRRI's research on wetting and drying, IFPRI's water policy research. A draft report has been submitted, externally reviewed and is now being finalized. Main message: dearth of credible ex post IAs in this area of CGIAR research.

- e. *Collaboration with the LSMS-ISA survey effort.*

SPIA is now in partnership with the World Bank Living Standards Measurement Study – Integrated Surveys of Agriculture (LSMS-ISA) team, through two research associates that SPIA has hired to work in LSMS-ISA countries over the period mid-2014 to mid-2016. These research associates are the focal points for all efforts to improve the way that agricultural technologies are uniquely identified in the surveys of Ethiopia, Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso.

In the discussion that followed, **JA** and **AT** reflected on the merits of SPIA investigating research areas outside of crop germplasm improvement. **JA** was of the opinion that natural resource management or policy research are conceptually harder to tackle, but also may not have delivered research outcomes on the same kind of scale as germplasm improvement. Low intensity of impact assessment may be strategically appropriate in these cases, which brings into question the notion that these really are "under-evaluated" areas of research. **AT** agreed that there is a dilemma when it comes to investing efforts in assessing impacts that are hard to find, and that a strong body of evidence may not end up influencing donor priorities. However, **AT** was strongly of the opinion that SPIA needs a balanced portfolio – we can't just focus on generating evidence on one part of the CGIAR. **AT** noted that DFID are keen to pull lessons out of the recent call for proposals on nutrition and health impacts. **AT** also noted that some of his colleagues at DFID were funding the LSMS-ISA work, and the global fund for statistics was working to strengthen NARS capacity. These are efforts we can do much better on – to link in better to these global efforts and that these were the types of issues to take back to the Fund Council – how can SPIA's leverage on such initiatives be strengthened? The **PORIA** workshop is the kind of development DFID want to see more at the Center level. **DG** added that in the feedback to FC it would be worth noting that NRM outcomes are not documented well – SPIA is only attempting, in the short-term, to show it is possible to use innovative methods to document this. That the body of knowledge needed would not be created in the two-year time horizon of SPIA's efforts on this. **MG** noted that there were a number of outputs within each individual project, and asked SPIA to reflect on its own theory of change. How will the projects come together to change the way the CGIAR operates? How can the findings be handed over to others to take forward? **JS** responded that, in writing the SIAC proposal, SPIA had in mind the agricultural census rounds towards the end of this decade. With LSMS-ISA, we are attempting to

test a number of a data collection protocols that can then institutionalised in other surveys in future. SPIA estimates that across the CGIAR, 100-200,000 households are surveyed each year around the world, and that these surveys are not carried out in a consistent manner, centrally accessible or cumulative over time in building a database. **DG** added that in the long run, we would like to have a global database on diffusion, and the logical home for such initiatives is in the national agricultural statistics programs. He welcomed **AT**'s offer to help SPIA feed into the DFID efforts at LSMS-ISA or related efforts aimed at improving agricultural statistics. In the case of LSMS countries, the work is in areas where the ISA team will conduct surveys in – we have been opportunistic. **MG** noted that the ISPC has been critical of CRPs that have been opportunistic, and wondered if SPIA is not at the risk of a missing an opportunity (in relation to metrics study, SRF, and partnership study that will be done at ISPC) over the next 6 months, if it is not more strategic in thinking about the targets for leveraging change. She noted that the partnership study, for instance, could examine if Centers or CRPs are the best place to collect diffusion data. **DG** agreed that these were issues SPIA should be thinking about, and in relation to this, he invited the PSC members to the SIAC internal program review in late January or early February of 2015 (agenda item 6a.). **DG** clarified that SIAC is opportunistic in terms of some activities but by no means all. **MG** encouraged SPIA to not wait until January or February – to have a conversation with Wayne Powell (Consortium Office) on such issues that would be looked at during the second call. **DG** responded that SPIA welcomed that and had initially hoped that the CO would be a part of PSC for SIAC.

5. Review of Objective 4 (Strengthening the community of practice for *ex post* IA in the CGIAR)

DG provided brief updates on progress on the following major activities:

a. Strengthening IA in the CGIAR and helping build a community of practice through new partnerships

For information only

This is a targeted effort of capacity-building using competitive calls for collaborations with advanced research institutes. Two proposals have been funded: Virginia Tech working with CIP & CIFOR to build capacity to strategically choose topics for IA and implement them. Initial workshops took place in May (CIP) and July (CIFOR) between scientists, senior CRP and Center staff and management, and Virginia Tech where cases have been identified for impact studies; a second proposal, with University of Illinois, merges elements of two earlier proposals received from ICRISAT into a single sub-grant using funds from the BMGF that remained unspent from the DIIVA project (\$237 K).

b. Quality rating of Center/CRP ex post impact assessments

SPIA is in the process of launching its on-line IA study quality review system (activity 4.4) as a key mechanism for ensuring high quality assessments of impact (and hence credibility) by the CGIAR. This is expected to also give Center- and CRP-based economists the leverage they need to argue more effectively for required resources for implementing more impact studies.

c. Workshops/ Conferences

Two SPIA-organized workshops were held in Minneapolis in late July; both are part of an overall strategy to strengthen the CGIAR impact assessment community of practice: (i) Measuring the poverty impacts of agricultural research; and (ii) Impact assessment focal point meeting. There was an excellent turnout for both events. Brief draft reports of the meetings appear as annexes in the SPIA Activity Update. A paper exploring methods and models for documenting the poverty impacts of agricultural research, drawing on relevant literature, recent case studies and discussions at the poverty impact workshop, is currently under development by the SPIA Chair.

d. CGIAR Impact website

A new CGIAR impact website was launched in May and includes new sections like Key References (SPIA recommended IA publications targeted at donors), a blog (open to IAFPs contributions as well), and a map of publications.

e. *Donor demands for and utilization of impact assessment related information*

The SPIA Secretariat is conducting a 'Donor Demand for ex post IA' study as a follow-up to its earlier survey conducted in 2004-05. This study aims to understand:

While the response rate for the IA survey is low (as expected for these surveys), we have received some thoughtful responses from the major donors to the CGIAR. SPIA is currently summarizing these results (see attachment) and intends to launch a phase 2 component of the Donor Demand for IA information study, building on the results of the donor survey conducted and analyzed in late 2014. In a brief discussion that followed, **JA** cautioned that surveys – framing questions – to elicit preferences is difficult work and to not undertake this lightly. **AT** noted, in general, that opportunism implied (and required) better coordination, and one of the problems is that there are far too many ongoing household surveys. If one was attempting to capture large-scale adoption, one cannot do a DIIVA study every couple of years – equally LSMS-ISA and the statistics office efforts is a huge opportunity (not useful just for CGIAR but also national governments).

6. Other Business

a. *SIAC internal program review*

SPIA is planning to organize a 1.5 day review of the SIAC program activities – retrospect and prospective as part of its internal monitoring and evaluation responsibility. Dates not yet confirmed but likely to be late January or early February. While there was a suggestion that SPIA could consider holding the internal review during IAAE, Milan, it was recognized that the mid-term review shouldn't be postponed that far. TK will scope out different options for dates.

b. *Administrative Officer for SIAC program in ISPC Secretariat.*

In late 2013, SPIA recruited a consultant to help support the legal contracting and financial management of SIAC, who has been working full-time since Jan 2014. We plan to convert this to a regular FAO post (two-year fixed term appointment) – open recruiting – to handle all financial and admin aspects of the SIAC program starting early 2015.

c. *Research support for SPIA Chair:*

The ISPC Secretariat has recently offered short term contracts to two MS graduates of Oxford University. They are expected to provide research and technical support to the Chair of SPIA under the SIAC program of work. Specific tasks include: Reading and critiquing completed impact studies, preparing a literature review on poverty impacts of agricultural research, assisting in drafting and editing comments and commentaries related to impact assessments, managing routine admin matters related to impact assessment studies, attending the workshop in Minneapolis (26th July 2014) on poverty impacts of agricultural research, and summarizing presentations, assisting in putting in place a quality rating system for impact assessment studies in CGIAR, and helping initiate and manage the review process. In response to a few questions, **DG** clarified that this was a fairly informal process in that it wasn't advertised by FAO – not something that was being done internationally or contracted through Oxford. The current RAs have/are working for durations of 3 months and 6 months, and since the flow of work is irregular, the positions will be open again (the idea is to recruit students who are looking for short-term work). None of the PSC members had objections to the process continuing in its current form.

7. Next PSC meeting

Tentatively, early November for discussion and decision regarding Micro level case study selection. TK to follow up in due course.