

## Strengthening Impact Assessment in the CGIAR (SIAC) Mid-term Review – Key Outcomes

27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> February 2015, Rome, Italy



Strengthening Impact Assessment in the CGIAR (SIAC) is a 4-year program of work funded by BMGF and CGIAR core resources. This mid-term review aimed to **(1)** give an account of SIAC activities (assess progress-to-date, provide comprehensive, integrated overview of SIAC); **(2)** solicit advice and feedback on SIAC, taking constraints and new opportunities into account; and **(3)** solicit advice on plans for a final review in late 2016, and **(4)** identify areas of focus for a potential second phase (from 2017). While Feb 27<sup>th</sup> and Feb 28<sup>th</sup> morning was dedicated to an activity by activity update and discussion, strategic discussions of SIAC and SPIA followed on Feb 28<sup>th</sup> afternoon. The meeting was attended by the ISPC Chair and Director; SIAC Project Steering Committee (PSC); SPIA Chair & Members, Activity Leaders, and Secretariat staff; and a donor (IFAD) representative [Agenda and participants list attached]. The following is a summary of the main discussion points both on the overall SIAC portfolio as well as specific activities.

1. Given the diverse range of impact-related studies underway and planned, SPIA was encouraged to compile a synthesis of its studies showing how, from a portfolio perspective, it all fits together and stating what it plans to deliver by the end of 2016. SPIA however cannot, and is not expected to take on the *whole* of impact related activity in the CGIAR, though it recognizes donors need credible information on impacts at the System-level.
  - a. The synthesis will need to reflect on SPIA's mandate, in relation to the SIAC theory of change. In particular, on whether it has the right balance of effort between generating knowledge/learning (for CRP/Centers' needs) vs generating evidence of CGIAR impact for donors' needs (System-level accountability).
  - b. The synthesis should draw on papers commissioned by SPIA and consider the feasibility of measuring impact of CGIAR research on SLOs/IDOs at the System-level, i.e., beyond small scale and short term effects, and define reasonable expectations.
2. There is a disconnect between rigorous IAs and the need for System-level impacts. SPIA will have to consider how to interpret and utilize the evidence from micro-level IAs to meet the demands for evidence of System-level impacts (in the sense of large-scale, sustainable impacts), or be explicit about our very limited ability to document System-level impacts.
3. There is a question of whether we are strengthening impact assessment *in* the CGIAR, or *of* the CGIAR. In the case of *in*, we recognize that a degree of independence of IAs can be compromised by Center DG/CRP Director interests.
4. There were different views expressed about the key priorities and where the balance of effort should be in the SIAC portfolio. For example, the relative value in generating simple, inexpensive and quick assessments of benefits of widely adopted technologies, calculated on the basis of rough estimates of adoption area by average benefit for adopters at the aggregate level, versus more rigorous estimates of effects generated by technology adoption in selected, localized environments. These are clearly generating different types of impact information meeting different needs e.g. learning vs. accountability. This begs the question of where SPIA's major emphasis should be, i.e. where it's highest value is? There is recognition of the continuing need for understanding impact at scale, which can be achieved either by synthesizing what we know from our micro-level studies or by doing large-scale long-term IAs. SPIA are doing both, and that flexibility exists in SIAC portfolio.
5. Assessing the IA needs of Centers and CRPs is also part of SPIA's mandate, as their need to learn about the effectiveness of alternative technologies or approaches can differ from donors' primary IA need for

accountability. In some cases these may overlap (e.g. impact-related information from RCTs providing valuable learning for researchers but at the same time providing baseline information for future *ex post* IAs) but in other cases, the tradeoff is more apparent. One example where these needs could be in conflict is with the nutrition & health IAs, where the current SIAC portfolio of studies focuses on the immediate output-nutrition link. It is quite conceivable, perhaps even likely, that the largest nutrition impacts from CGIAR research has occurred via the causal pathway of *production increase - price decrease - increased consumption - improved health/nutrition*, which is not part of the nutrition study. This does not negate the importance of achieving a better, more in-depth (or nuanced) understanding of the adoption-to-nutrition linkage, and one of the key outcomes of this group of nutrition IA studies could then be a critique of what one *can* learn. SPIA must think carefully of how this and other sets of studies fit into the SIAC theory of change.

6. Recognizing the dearth of well-done *ex-ante* studies in the CGIAR, some observers suggested there may be a role for SPIA here (perhaps in a second phase of SIAC).
7. A consensus view emerged about the critical importance in understanding the extent of and sources of measurement errors between various adoption data collection approaches (e.g. farmer's self-reported, expert opinion, and DNA fingerprinting data on varietal adoption). SIAC's agenda is rightly focused on this issue and it was agreed this should continue to have high priority.
8. While work on LSMS-ISA is opportunistic in nature, and cannot be comprehensive, this is a highly valuable effort to tap into and help establish 'proof of concept' for making collection of relevant adoption data more systematic and 'institutionalized'. SPIA will continue to assess the priority here including giving increased focus and resources to this type of effort in SIAC Phase II.
9. Donors are increasingly looking for evidence of impact for making allocation decisions, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to justify larger research investments without evidence from *ex post* impact assessments. This is expected to become more critical as donors choose what they will fund, rather than using an open multilateral funding window. This may not have been the case in the past, judging by the dearth of evidence of impact from CGIAR research on irrigation and water management as documented in the recent report by Doug Merrey. The lack of IA activity on research such as irrigation management (and other research areas) remains puzzling. Is it an issue of lack of capacity, lack of interest/institutional priority, or lack of impact itself?
10. Issues related to the approach to, and most effective means for, IA capacity building at CGIAR Centers were discussed, in the context of SIAC Activity 4.2. In particular, whether the CGIAR scientists are benefitting adequately, e.g. under the Virginia Tech-led project (for CIP and CIFOR scientists) and under the ICRISAT project (supported by University of Illinois). And should SIAC focus more on the kind of capacity building that was built into the recent RCT workshop?
11. While the Quality review Star Rating System is considered a really good idea and addresses both Center/CRP and donor needs, there are concerns about how to incentivize researchers to submit their IA reports. SPIA will coordinate with IEA evidence of claims submitted for evaluations) and possibly CO (metrics in annual reports from CRPs) on indirect incentives, and suggestions for positive incentives to individuals were taken.
12. SPIA was encouraged to think about Phase 2 of SIAC if it is deemed necessary, and to consider what a SIAC Phase 2 research agenda would target.



## SIAC Midterm Review Meeting

organized by the CGIAR Independent Science and Partnership Council's  
**Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA)**  
Venue: Villa degli Angeli - Via Spiaggia del Lago, 32  
00040 Castel Gandolfo - Italy  
**27 – 28 February 2015**

### AGENDA

#### Thursday, 26 February: Evening (19:30) Welcome Dinner

#### Friday, 27 February: Morning (08:45 - 12:30)

#### 08:45 – 09:10 1. INTRO / CURRENT STATUS (Presenters: Doug + Tim)

- Welcome and introductions
- Background, overall scope, objectives and vision of success of the SIAC program
- Modus operandi for commissioning studies
- Timeline – budget + key milestones

#### 09:10 – 09:30 2. PURPOSE OF THE MID-TERM REVIEW (Presenter: Doug)

- Provide a comprehensive and integrated view of SIAC program to PSC & research activity leaders
- Assess state of progress to-date across the various activities against the planned timetable and vision of success as outlined in proposal
- Corrective measures and adaptation required in view of delays, etc.
- Agree on plan for final external review in late 2016
- Summary of major shifts in focus (late 2012 – early 2015)

#### 3. PROGRAM REVIEW

##### **SIAC Objective 1. Develop and pilot innovative methods for collection & assembly of diffusion data**

(Chair: Doug; Presenter: Mywish, Skype)

#### 09:30 – 10:30 *Activity 1.1: Advance methodologies for tracking the uptake and adoption of improved varieties*

- Summarize results to-date from three field studies: Cassava in Ghana; Beans in Zambia; Maize in Uganda

10:30 – 10:45 COFFEE

#### 10:45 – 11:05 *Activity 1.2: Advance methodologies for tracking the uptake and adoption of NRM technologies*

Summarize results from and implications of:

- IRRRI's study: Hyper-spectral signature analysis (alternative wetting & drying of rice in Bangladesh)
- CIMMYT's study: Mobile phone-based applications (improved nutrient management in India)
- ICRISAT's proposal

#### 11:05 – 11:15 *Activity 1.3: Exploring market-based approaches for tracking adoption*

Concept note, ready to launch open call

#### *Activity 1.4: Develop and disseminate best practices for collecting diffusion data*

No activity thus far; workshop will bring together results/learning from 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 in late 2015

##### **SIAC Objective 2. Institutionalize the collection of diffusion data**

(Chair: Meena; Presenters: Mywish, Tim, James)

#### 11:15 – 11:45 *Activity 2.1: Crop germplasm improvement, filling gaps in adoption estimates.*

Progress to-date; plans for completion by October 2015

#### 11:45 – 12:45 *Activity 2.2: Natural resource management, filling gaps in adoption estimates.*

NRM research outcome database – initial candidates (PMS and Annual Reports); next steps for validating; and geo-spatial integrated outcomes database proposal

12:45 – 13:45 LUNCH + WALK BREAK

#### Friday, 27 February: Afternoon (13:45 - 17:30)

#### 13:45 – 14:15 *Activity 2.3: Policy-oriented research (POR) influence claims.*

POR outcomes database and report (Mitch Renkow by skype) and next steps

**14:15 – 15:00** *Activity 2.4: Institutionalising adoption data collection*  
LSMS-ISA in Ethiopia & Malawi (Frederic and John) and plans for other countries; National surveys in Zambia & Mozambique; India; Entry points for the agricultural census round??

**SIAC Objective 3. Assess the full range of impacts from CGIAR research**

(Chair: Julian; Presenters: Erwin (3.0), Karen (3.2), Bob (skype) or Meena (3.1), Tim/Doug Merrey (3.3)

**15:00 – 15:40** *Activity 3.0: Measuring the impact of CGIAR research on health and nutrition*  
Progress to date; issues arising

15:40 – 16:00 COFFEE

**16:00 – 16:30** *Activity 3.3: Under-evaluated areas of CGIAR research*  
Plan and progress to-date (irrigation report by Doug Merrey); next steps

**16:30 – 16:50** *Activity 3.1: Documenting long-term, large scale impacts from CG research*  
Progress to-date; brief description of the ranked study proposals (decision next week by PSC)

**16:50 – 17:30** *Activity 3.2: Micro-scale impact studies using experimental and quasi-experimental methods*  
Progress to-date; inception workshop and capacity development

Adjourn at 17:30. Drinks and Dinner at 19:00

**Saturday, 28 February: Morning (08:30-13:00)**

**SIAC Objective 4. Support the development of communities of practice for ex-post IA**

(Chair: Rachel; Presenters: Jeff Alwang, Lakshmi, James, Tim)

**08:30 – 08:35** *Activity 4.1: Small grants*  
What we learned from those we commissioned and why we cancelled it

**08:35 – 09:05** *Activity 4.2: IA capacity building in the CGIAR*  
Virginia Tech with CIP and CIFOR – progress update and plans

**09:05 – 09:10** *Activity 4.3: Workshops and conferences*  
Brief update (Minneapolis & IAFP meeting) – future plans (IAAE; Science Forum in Jan 2016)

**09:10 – 09:35** *Activity 4.4: Quality Rating System for IA studies*  
On-line review of CGIAR impact studies – update

**09:35 – 09:50** *Activity 4.5: CGIAR Impact Website*  
Brief overview/demonstration

**09:50 – 10:00** **M&E: Survey of donor demands for impact assessment:**  
Email survey results – key messages and remaining issues; next steps

10:00 – 10:15 COFFEE

**10:15 – 12:00** **Flagged topics / Cross-cutting issues** (Chair: Doug)  
SIAC deliverables – on target for delivery? Highest value outputs?  
Reassessing priorities – scope for re-allocating resources to achieve specific results (eg. adoption vs impact)?

**12:00 – 12:30** **SIAC management** (Chair: Doug)  
Scope for improving PSC meetings and member/observer interactions?  
Enhancing engagement with the FC, via the sub-committee FCEIA?  
External review in 2016 – commissioned by the IEA?  
Need for a 6-month extension beyond Dec 2016

**12:30 – 13:00** **Final Session** (Chair: Doug)  
Summarizing key take-home messages; Assessing progress towards achieving our vision of success

13:00 – 14:00 LUNCH + Adjourn for those leaving



Independent  
Science and  
Partnership  
Council

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organized by the CGIAR Independent Science and Partnership Council's

### Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA)

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00040 Castel Gandolfo - Italy

27 – 28 February 2015

#### PARTICIPANT LIST

|    |                    |  |
|----|--------------------|--|
| 1  | Julian Alston      | UC Davis & SIAC PSC                    |
| 2  | Jeff Alwang        | Virginia Tech                          |
| 3  | Rachel Bedouin     | CGIAR IEA                              |
| 4  | Erwin Bulte        | Wageningen University & SPIA           |
| 5  | Denyse Faulkner    | CGIAR Consortium Office                |
| 6  | Peter Gardiner     | CGIAR ISPC                             |
| 7  | Maggie Gill        | University of Aberdeen & CGIAR ISPC    |
| 8  | Doug Gollin        | University of Oxford & CGIAR ISPC/SPIA |
| 9  | John Ilukor        | CGIAR ISPC/SPIA                        |
| 10 | Meenakshi J.V.     | University of Delhi & SPIA             |
| 11 | Doug Merrey        | Independent Consultant (via Skype)     |
| 12 | Tim Kelley         | CGIAR ISPC/SPIA                        |
| 13 | Frederic Kosmowski | CGIAR ISPC/SPIA                        |
| 14 | Lakshmi Krishnan   | CGIAR ISPC/SPIA                        |
| 15 | Karen Macours      | Paris School of Economics & SPIA       |
| 16 | Mywish Maredia     | Michigan State University (via Skype)  |
| 17 | Shantanu Mathur    | IFAD                                   |
| 18 | Mitch Renkow       | NC State University (via Skype)        |
| 19 | James Stevenson    | CGIAR ISPC/SPIA                        |
| 20 | Alan Tollervey     | DFID & SIAC PSC (via Skype)            |
| 21 | Ira Vater          | CGIAR ISPC/SPIA                        |