

Minutes of the forty-first meeting of SPIA (SPIA 41)

Jaypee Siddarth Hotel, New Delhi, India, 24-25 March 2012

Attendance:

Derek Byerlee (SPIA Chair), Doug Gollin (SPIA Member), Bhavani Shankar (SPIA Member), Tim Kelley (SPIA Secretary), James Stevenson (ISPC Secretariat)

1. Opening comments

Derek Byerlee welcomed members to the meeting. The meeting was held in closed session (i.e. without observers).

2. Background orientation

Tim Kelley and James Stevenson ran through a list of operating norms and long-running strategic issues for SPIA as a kind of induction briefing for Doug Gollin.

3. Review of agenda

The agenda for the meeting was approved without additions or amendments.

4. Minutes of SPIA 40

These were approved without amendments. It was agreed that the change from centers to CRPs would be the focus for discussion with the impact assessment focal points at the meeting in Foz do Iguacu on 17th August 2012.

5. On-going studies

5.1 Impact of CGIAR research on poverty and under-nutrition

It was agreed that Bhavani Shankar would be the SPIA focal point for this study. At the forthcoming meeting at the London International Development Center 8th – 10th May 2012, all the original project proposals (minus budget details) would be circulated to all participants ahead of the meeting, in order for everyone to have a chance to get up to speed on each other's work.

Action: James Stevenson to circulate proposals and slides from presenters to all attendees, requesting that presenters focus on points raised by reviewers. Assign discussant responsibility. Invite Jeff Alwang, Ben Groom, Peter Hazell, Stefan Dercon

The ideas for background papers from SPIA to complement the case-studies were discussed. On nutrition impacts, it was agreed that Bhavani would write-up a nutrition paper in consultation with CRP 4 leaders, with a focus on different kinds of CGIAR outputs. All SPIA members consider this to be an important contribution and

there was wide agreement that it is very difficult to prove a causal relationship all the way along the impact pathway from research outputs to nutrition impacts.

Action: Bhavani Shankar to draft a paper in time for SPIA 42 in Foz do Iguacu.

On the potential for a background / summary paper on poverty impacts, it was agreed that SPIA should wait until we have the case-studies coming in, and one possibility is to summarise methodological lessons learned from the four case-studies (CIMMYT, World Fish, IRRI and IFPRI) commissioned under this study, plus the three impact (Objective3) studies under the DIIVA project. All seven of these studies will be finishing in mid-2013. John Gibson was suggested as one possible consultant for this paper. Another option for extending SPIA's involvement in this literature is to commission Nelson Villoria to carry out additional analyses using the productivity shocks and GTAP simulations explicitly linked to household datasets.

Action: Agreed to wait on these papers until 2013 when they might feature in the final report on the poverty impact study. Not a priority at the present moment.

5.2 Diffusion and Impact of Improved Varieties in Africa (DIIVA)

The period to the end of 2012 is an important period in pulling the results together and maximizing on the investments that have been made in this project to date. Derek Byerlee suggested that this should be a big priority for the next 12 months. In reviewing progress through the Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings, various issues had arisen with discrepancies between Objective 1 and 2 estimates, and some debate about some cases over which of the estimates is the most reliable. It was agreed that that PSC needed to get a bit tougher on lead consultant Tom Walker regarding clarifying the methods used in eliciting expert opinion data – the TRIVSA have been more serious on developing guidelines for how to do the expert opinion data collection.

Action: Tim Kelley to request that Tom Walker asks for an explicit statement of how CGIAR centers obtained their objective 1 data. James Stevenson to contact Tony Murray about requirements for incorporating the DIIVA outputs into the ASTI database.

5.3 Legume improvement study

Doug Gollin reported on communication with Cynthia Bantilan over ICRISAT involvement and the availability of data from the TRIVSA project for this study. In Maharastra study for TRIVSA Objective 2 surveys, the proposal is to focus on the districts only where all 5 ICRISAT crop were grown. It was suggested that instead of drawing up a sample framework at district level, it would be better to stratify by Agro-Ecological Zone (AEZ), and draw a random sample that is representative at the AEZ level. Also, it is highly preferred to ask all farmers about all crops rather than focus on the sub-set of highly diversified farmers. Cynthia Bantilan has expressed her concern that ICRISAT have a resource constraint.

Action: Doug to continue the contact and facilitate access to technical inputs to improve the study. SPIA will offer matched funds under a Letter of Agreement (\$70,000 from SPIA) for Andra Pradesh and Maharastra. SPIA will meet with Ramesh Chand to discuss the potential for NCAP to run a comparable survey in Madya Pradesh.

On Northern Nigeria, a protocol for distinguishing traditional varieties vs. modern varieties of cowpea as a class, based on phenotypic characteristics, is currently with the LSMS team in the country for their consideration.

On Mali, after having the opportunity of doing something similar raised by the LSMS-ISA team it was agreed that we would wait on that for now, but bear it in mind for 2013/2014.

On Tanzania (pigeonpea) it was agreed that SPIA would try and get similar protocols included into the forthcoming LSMS-ISA survey rounds.

Reflecting on the physical and mental energy required from SPIA to get the studies done, it was agreed that we could trial getting some bright young people in from good economics schools to work with the relevant CGIAR centers in developing and field-testing protocols, and facilitating the process of integrating them in the LSMS-ISA survey rounds. If these went well, the goal would be to take these protocols to the agricultural censuses, to get the larger sample data that would complement the LSMS-ISA surveys.

Action: SPIA to wrap up this study during 2013. Future stripe reviews will be bundled under the main Strengthening Impact Assessment in the CGIAR proposal to multiple donors.

5.4 Germplasm collection conservation characterisation and evaluation

SPIA discussed the case-study reports submitted by Robinson and Srinivasan that attempt to establish the link between the genebank key traits that made their way through into commercial varieties, with economic valuation of these impacts by CS Srinivasan. There was a lot of discussion about the merits of this kind of cherry-picking approach to valuation, but agreement that the estimates of full costs of maintaining the genebanks (from the Boo Koo and Pardey study) should be introduced in cost-benefit analysis.

There is a feeling that SPIA has perhaps micro-managed this study – too much time required from SPIA members and secretariat for a study with a modest budget and scope.

Action: SPIA to review and send in comments in track changes to Doug Gollin. Doug will take the lead on the study as a whole, and Tim will act as point of contact with Jonathan Robinson.

5.5 Randomized control trials

This long-standing workplan item was not discussed in much detail. There was wide agreement that RCTs could feature more prominently in the large multi-donor proposal than it has so far, in estimating yield or profit effects for farmer adopters. The text that SPIA has been drafting and re-drafting for a long time could be published as a six-page brief on the website.

Action: Doug Gollin to take a look at the draft and revise.

6. New activities in 2012 and beyond

6.1 Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Proposal for Strengthening Impact Assessment in the CGIAR

Derek Byerlee gave an overview of the context and history to this proposal. The CGIAR has to play a central role in data collection from large national-level surveys – the centres have the comparative advantage in identifying the technologies.

Some donors have expressed concern that SPIA may move too much into areas where measurement is easiest, leaving a gap where methods / metrics are weak but where CGIAR need to report (e.g. environment, gender).

SPIA understands that the BMGF would like a strategic shift away from cherry-picking and documenting success stories to random sampling for impact assessment. One idea is to have annual review process of a broad area of research (e.g. NRM) with pull-out boxes on successes and failures. The stripe review scoping study took quite a bit of time, so one per year might be too much. However, the general principle of instituting a periodic assessment is a sound one.

Unresolved questions raised in the discussion included:

- Whether to put a long-term time-horizon retrospectively, or focus on the last 10 years?
- How to look beyond the CRPs – roadmap for collecting the data in the context of the national system?
- If improving the data is the key rationale for the project, is objective 3 (impact assessment studies) still relevant?

There were some good ideas exchanged regarding the potential for institutionalising the data collection processes. Doug Gollin suggested targeting the censuses in 2019 - 2021.

There was wide agreement that the steering committee would comprise Bioversity, someone from the Consortium Office and SPIA. On Objectives 1 (methods) and 3 (impact studies), the modality will be a mix of competitive and commissioned studies. Objective 2 (national-level surveys) would be largely commissioned.

7. Communication and networking

7.1 ICAE pre-conference workshop, 18th August 2012

A number of useful suggestions for changes to the draft program were made and incorporated. On the day before the workshop (i.e. Friday 17th August), SPIA has a half-day with the IAFPs, mainly to discuss the implications of the shift from centers to CRPs as the unit of analysis.

SPIA are invited to meet with Monika Zurek (BMGF) and Gerry Nelson (Harvest Choice) regarding a link-up between BMGF and Global Futures on ex-ante and ex-post impact assessment, for calibration of models with past impacts.

Decision: SPIA will schedule a meeting with Global Futures (10am – 12noon) on 17th August 2012. Then from 1pm – 6pm on 17th August, meet with the impact assessment focal points to talk about making IA work in the new CGIAR (NRM, CGI, Policy), the plans of the large BMGF proposal, and general dialogue.

7.2 Publications

Action: Doug Gollin to pick up the RCT brief (as per item 5.5)

7.3 Website

James Stevenson presented data on website visits for <http://impact.cgiar.org> showing a positive trend in visitors, and a healthy boost evident from sending out a newsletter in January.

Action: James to develop slides for Derek's presentation to the ISPC.

Putting data on the website from the commissioned studies (not part of contract but include in future contracts)

There was widespread agreement with the proposal that, for any study that SPIA commissions, there is a condition stipulated that all the data are available for public consumption within specific period of data collection. So for the GCCCE study, the spreadsheets should be clean and ready for the web.

Action: James Stevenson to develop text for the next issue of the newsletter with a few key stories:

- **Personal message from Derek on the need for the CGIAR to get serious about tracking adoption and getting beyond crop germplasm improvement.**
- **Update on the RCT that IRRI and UC Berkeley have on submergence tolerant rice**
- **News item on Doug taking over as Chair**
- **The program for the ICAE pre-conference workshop**

The idea of SPIA maintaining a database on past impact assessment studies was contested on the grounds of lack of value relative to high cost of maintenance. One option is for SPIA to take over a quality-rating system prospectively, to signal to donors and scientists what good studies look like. Quality, scale, novelty are all important. For a 4 or 5 star study, SPIA would generate an impact brief, outsourced to a set group of editors.

Action: Send out note to focal points requesting no more than 3 studies per centre from the last few years.

8. Workplan and budget

SPIA members agreed that all flights would be economy for all non-ISPC meeting travel.

It was agreed that the process between April and June (to be communicated to Impact Assessment Focal Points by email):

- Put the concept note in to Gates ASAP.
- Skype meetings in the month following the concept note submitted between SPIA chair and IAFPs and the consortium. Current chair on all the calls – for continuity.
- Centre scientists come to London to join the poverty workshop group if they want to (unlikely).
- After we have the draft, send it back out for consultation again in May-June.

SPIA will use under-spent budget allocations from studies such as the legume impact study to commission low-cost high-return methodologically interesting studies using RCTs (de Janvry and Sadouley at UC Berkeley; Tavneet Suri at MIT). Other options developed in brainstorming included:

- 1) Tom Jayne – Commission a paper on conservation agriculture in Zambia.

Action: Derek to approach Tom Jayne, possibly with link up to masters student found by Doug?

- 2) CIFOR and REDD

Commission Hans Gregersen for no more than 3 months work to do a study on the influence of CIFOR on REDD.

Action: DB to discuss this possibility with Jeff Sayer

3) Crop failure and yield estimates in the RCTs and other farmer-level studies

Realised yield is often measured on area harvested rather than area planted basis. Tavneet is working on this on NERICAs in Sierra Leone, where NERICA often fails to germinate.

Action: Doug to request concept note from Tavneet

4) Commission follow-up with GTAP to Nelson Villoria on estimating poverty impacts using HH datasets and the Evenson and Gollin productivity shocks.

Action: James and Derek to discuss with Nelson in the context of writing up the PNAS paper for publication.

9. New SPIA member

After some discussion about alternative candidates, Madhu Khanna (Environmental Economist at University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign) was a clear choice as associate member. Karen Macours is potentially interested in becoming a full SPIA member, and Doug Gollin will have an open line of communication with both of these women.

Action: DG to follow up with Madhu Khanna as second option to go alongside Karen Macours

10. Any other business

Regarding the NRM stripe review from the main ISPC agenda: SPIA is associated with a number of the impact assessment studies cited in the report. The underlying premise of the report is that NRM research has had impacts. SPIA needs to read through and make sure that the portrayal of impact assessment results is accurate.

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