

# EVALUATION BRIEF

## CRP Governance and Management Review

March 2014



### Background and Context

The CGIAR Reform changed the way the CGIAR conducts business. With the establishment of CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs), Centers aligned their research activities, institutional capacities, and financial resources to 16 research programs. The shift reflected a programmatic strategy that was outcomes based, time limited and intended to leverage a broad array of partners to accomplish the CGIAR's overarching goals of less rural poverty, better food security, better nutrition and health, and sustainably managed resources. CRPs occupy a complex organizational space within the CGIAR system. The programs vary in scale and focus, the number of partners, including participating Centers, and the balance of resources derived through the Fund Council and bilateral donors. Although accountability for the programs' performance rests with lead Centers, which are in turn accountable to the Consortium, each CRP has additional mechanisms in place for the program's governance and management.

Requested by the Consortium and approved by the Fund Council in 2012, the Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA) carried out a comprehensive review of the governance and management of CRPs. The aims of the review were to assess the extent to which the structures and functions of the existing CRP governance and management support the achievement of the CGIAR's strategy, to take stock of experiences so far, and to identify issues and provide lessons that are applicable across the CRPs. The review began in June 2013, with the final report disseminated in March 2014.

### Evaluation Methodology

The review relied on the *Sourcebook for Evaluating Global and Regional Partnership Programs* and the CGIAR's standards and guidelines in governance and management to establish the review criteria. The review differentiated between the legal accountability of the Lead Center and Consortium boards for CRP performance, and the governance function exercised by the range of CRP bodies approved for each CRP.

During the inception phase which consisted of initial interviews with stakeholders and a desk review, the review framework was designed and a set of emerging issues identified. Structured interviews, additional document review, and web-based surveys were used to solicit information from the Consortium and Fund Council staff, donors to the Fund, CRP leaders, Center board chairs and Directors General (DGs), and Center finance staff/heads of corporate services.

Findings and conclusions triangulated information from different sources and were further discussed with CRP and Center representatives through a series of webinars. The draft report was circulated to stakeholders for feedback, factual corrections and comments.

### Key Findings

#### CRP Governance

While the review found the overall accountability structure to be functional, the array of CRP governance bodies was found to be complex and duplicative. The review identified a total of 23 active CRP governance bodies; these varied in terms of composition, size, function and degree of

independence. Some CRPs have a single governance body, while others were found to have the functional equivalent of two or more.

Overall, CRP governance was found to be heavily influenced by lead and participating Centers; external partners had limited roles at the governance level, and women and individuals from target regions were found to be significantly under-represented. In programs designed to engage in substantive partnership development, build capacity and integrate gender throughout the programs, the imbalance in representation and participation in CRP governance undermines confidence in the legitimacy and fairness of decision-making. The review also noted the increased potential for conflicts of interest for Lead Center boards between their duty to Centers and their accountability to the Consortium for CRPs.

A key finding was the lack of a common understanding about roles and relative authority at the system level among the Fund Council, the Consortium and Centers. The Fund Council and the Consortium are in the course of clarifying their relationship in the dual pillar structure now in place. At present, in spite of the intended structure, the Consortium does not appear to have equal standing with the Fund Council. At the same time, Centers are clarifying their roles and relationship within the new structure, and negotiating with the Consortium the balance of representation, alliance and independence.

Resource mobilization and resource allocation were referred to in the review in multiple contexts. While overall investment in the CGIAR has increased at a substantial rate, doubling in five years to \$1 billion, W1&W2 funding (the most flexible of the resources available to CRPs) represented just 37% of CRP funding in 2012, and for some of CRPs substantially less. Centers currently raise a significant percentage of total CRP funding (55%). While bilateral funding is likely to remain an important component of overall CRP financing, the extent to which CRPs are reliant on bilateral support, whether through the Fund or through Centers, has the potential to distort priority setting within the CRPs and limits the flexibility to allocate resources. At the system level, the lack of a coherent and integrated strategy for resource mobilization reinforces an over-awareness of boundaries and distinctions in standing among organizational entities intended to be complementary and collaborative.

### **CRP Management**

Currently, CRP management draws heavily upon existing center research and administrative capacity, which provide the CRPs with adequate access to these management resources. CRP management costs were found to be similar across the CRPs and averaged 3-4 percent. However, the underlying expenses that comprised the management budgets varied across CRPs to such an extent that it was impossible to make comparisons or form an opinion about the relative cost-effectiveness of current management structures.

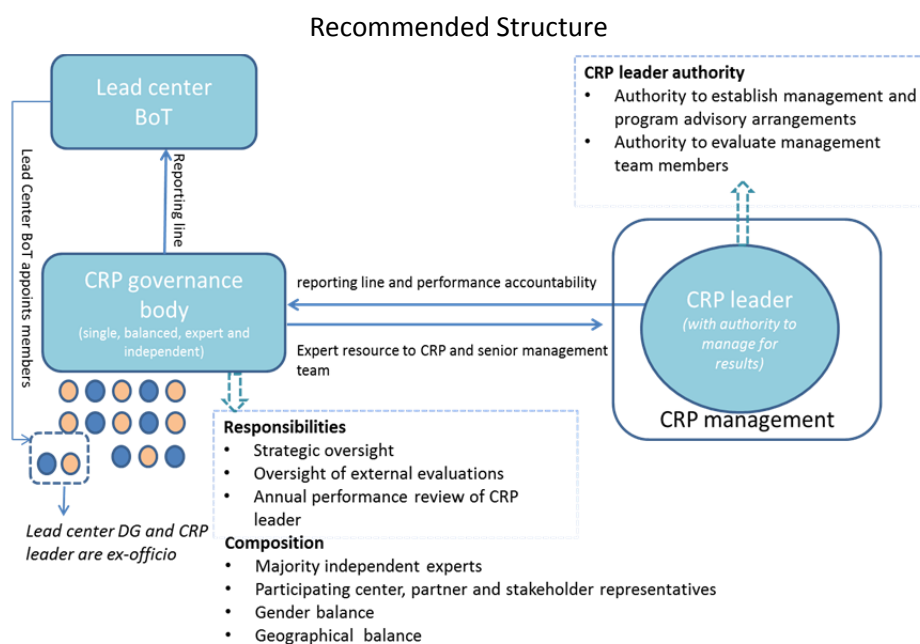
The review also considered the extent to which CRP leaders had the authority to manage for results. It found the current reporting line, which for the most part is through the Lead Center DG, as well as the number and structure of CRP governance and management committees limited the scope and authority of CRP leaders to manage effectively.

## Conclusions

The review validated broad support for the underlying intent and strategy for the new CGIAR and a positive sense that new and more collaborative research was underway. However, the shift in investment from Centers to programs, uncertainty about the levels and flow of W1&2 funds, and the relative imbalance between resources generated by the Fund and those generated by the Centers have heightened the sense of risk on the part of the Centers and sharpened concerns about a loss of standing within the system as a whole. The review also noted that while the basic accountability framework for CRPs was functional, the governance bodies closest to CRPs were less so. It concluded that there were a number of opportunities to simplify and improve the effectiveness of CRP governance and management, and stressed that accountability for CRP performance should clearly rest with CRP management.

## Recommendations

The review looked at the larger accountability framework for the CRPs and its functionality as well as the underlying diversity of the CRPs and how this diversity should inform governance and management structures. Eight recommendations emerged from the review, which are intended to highlight a core group of principles that support good governance and effective management rather than a rigid set of structures.



The recommendations are informed by the need to (i) streamline structures, (ii) strengthen the independence and legitimacy of decision making, (iii) provide CRP leaders with the authority to manage for results, (iv) strengthen accountability and transparency, and (v) recognize the need to sustain the institutional capacity of Centers.

### Governance Recommendations

1. Create a single, balanced governing body for each CRP that reports directly to the Lead Center board on the performance of the program. The CRP governance body should bring together appropriate expertise, include a majority of independent expert members, and accommodate lead center and partner representation.
2. Assure transparency in the work of CRP governance bodies by making available on CRP websites member names and qualifications, meeting agendas and minutes, and otherwise sharing information that builds confidence in the basis and quality of decision making.
3. Institute policy and decision-making mechanisms for managing conflicts of interest at the governance and management levels of CRPs.

### Management recommendations

4. Strengthen the authority of the CRP leader to manage for results:
  - place the reporting line and accountability for performance with the CRP governing body,
  - give CRP leaders the authority to establish appropriate management and program advisory arrangements,
  - institute a formal role in the performance evaluation of CRP program managers and coordinators employed by Centers.
5. Establish uniform guidelines that harmonize CRP management budgets, including staff costs attributed to program administration, coordination of key functions, and research management, to reflect the legitimate costs of program management and to better assess management efficiency and effectiveness.

### Center and CGIAR System

6. Resolve the outstanding issue of maintaining Center financial reserves through a prudent and equitable system-level agreement between the Fund Council and the Consortium on the use of W1&W2 funds with respect to reserves.
7. Create guidelines that increase transparency and encourage the alignment of resource mobilization on the part of Centers for activities that strengthen Centers' capacity to achieve the SRF, or for purposes consistent with Center mandates but outside CRPs.
8. Evaluate the Genebanks CRP for lessons learned on investing in system-wide research assets.

### Management Response

The CGIAR Consortium welcomed the review of CRP Governance and Management conducted by the Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA) which it found to be comprehensive and insightful. The CGIAR Consortium concurred with most findings and recommendations in this report, a number of which are already reflected in the evolving structures and practices of Centers and CRPs, and should pave the way for improved governance and management of CRPs.

In terms of CRP leadership, governance and reporting the CGIAR Consortium generally agreed with the review and its recommendations, except for one important difference, namely that it believes the CRP leader should report directly (solid line;) to the Lead Center DG, and indirectly (dotted line) to the Independent Steering Committee. This dual reporting system, i.e. administrative, day-to-day reporting to the Lead Center DG and technical or functional reporting to the Independent Steering Committee, would support the CRP leader's authority to manage for results. Other more minor differences are described in the CGIAR Consortium's Management Response.