IEA Guidance Note G1

Guidance for Managing
the Independent External Evaluation of
CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs)

January 2015

Table of contents

Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement

CGIAR

Tables

Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement

CGIAR

List of Abbreviations

CCEE   CRP-Commissioned External Evaluation

CRP   CGIAR Research Program

EPMR External Program Management Reviews

IEA   Independent Evaluation Arrangement of the CGIAR

ISPC   Independent Science and Partnership Council of the CGIAR

M&E   Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

QAAP Quality Assurance Advisory Panel

RG   Evaluation Reference Group

SPIA   Standing Panel on Impact Assessment of the CGIAR

ToR   Terms of Reference

Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement

CGIAR

Introduction

1.   The CGIAR Policy for Independent External Evaluation, approved by the CGIAR Fund Council and the Consortium Board in 2012 ("the Policy"), sets out the mandate, scope and proposed implementation arrangements for evaluation in the reformed CGIAR. This includes a regular Independent External Evaluation of each CGIAR Research Program (CRP) managed by the Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA).

2.   This Guidance Note is intended as helpful reference for those commissioning and carrying out CRP evaluations as well as those being evaluated, with the aim of making the preparation for CRP evaluations and their conduct more efficient, raising the quality and consistency in Evaluation Reports across CRPs, and enhancing the usefulness of the evaluation for its stakeholders, the CRP management and staff, partners and stakeholders, including the donors.

3.   This Guidance Note builds on the long experience with evaluation in the CGIAR, in particular External Program Management Reviews (EPMRs).

4.   The Guidance Note covers: a) what a CRP evaluation should address; b) roles and responsibilities; c) planning ahead for evaluations, including setting up the collection of monitoring data; d) planning self-evaluation and other evaluative studies that will feed into the overall evaluation; e) designing the evaluation, managing the evaluation, reporting and follow-up. **Error! Reference source not found.** presents the roles and responsibilities in a CRP evaluation and Table 2 lists typical activities and their timing in a CRP evaluation.

5.   Planning well ahead for evaluation is given great prominence in this Guidance Note. As the CRPs establish their own monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, the CRP evaluations can increasingly draw from data, information and CRP commissioned studies for their assessment of past performance. This should make the actual overall CRP evaluation process both more useful and less of a burden to researchers, administrators and partners of the CRP.

Evaluation purpose

6.   CRP evaluations are external and independent. Their primary purpose is to enhance the contribution that CRP is likely to have towards reaching the CGIAR goals and fulfilling its own objectives for improving the sustainability and livelihoods of poor producers and consumers in the program's targeted regions and agro-ecologies. The CRPs evaluations aim to provide essential evaluative information for decision-making by Program management and its funders on issues such as extension, expansion and structuring of the program and adjustments in some aspects of the program.

Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement

CGIAR

Evaluation scope

7.   CRP evaluations will cover the entire program irrespective of funding sources[1] (whether core-type funding from Windows 1 and 2, institutional funding from Window 3, or bilateral restricted-type funding). The evaluations are initially conducted when the CRPs have been in existence for 2-4 years. To various degrees, CRPs in this first cycle include research which was carried out prior to the start of the CRPs. The CRPs thus combine research with multiple temporalities including past and continuing research lines and new research lines. The CRP evaluations take into account these various temporalities when assessing results. In particular, the summative part focuses largely on results deriving from research preceding the CRP, to the extent that they are still part of the CRP research lines. However, a major part of the evaluations looks at the evolution of the programmatic approach and structure supporting optimal program function, early achievements of the program and likely effectiveness of research carrying over from past Center programs and conducted at the CRP.

What should a CRP evaluation address?

8.   Evaluations of the CRPs in the CGIAR's research portfolio should cover a reasonable period of program implementation (4-6 years) for serving both program implementation and accountability regarding achievement. Therefore, CRP evaluations occur at different times of CRP and CGIAR decision-making. The first CRP evaluations conducted may assess, particularly in their summative component, research designed prior the establishment of the CRP, and only the subsequent evaluations will fully address the performance of the CRP. The evaluation will normally feed into key decisions by senior managers and funders, such as:

- what adjustments need to be made to research lines, management and partnerships to ensure likeliness of results;
- whether to restructure the CRP, consolidate, expand or reduce its sub-components or even consolidate with other CRPs;
- whether to continue, increase or decrease funding to the CRP and/or its sub-components;
- whether to extend the period for the current CRP or some of its components.

9.   The CRP evaluations are designed to answer a series of evaluation questions under the main evaluation criteria: relevance, quality of science, effectiveness, efficiency, impact

---

[1] http://www.cgiarfund.org/how_the_fund_works

Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement

CGIAR

and sustainability. While the evaluation questions should reflect the specific context of the CRP, the general purpose, coverage and main users for CRP evaluations are similar, and comparability between evaluations of different CRPs and evaluations over time is desirable. The process for developing and agreeing evaluation questions is covered below.

10. Within the framework of the main evaluation criteria, the CRP evaluation will look at programmatic and organizational aspects. Programmatic aspects include research questions addressing research and development challenges, coherence of design and alignment of the program portfolio towards its objectives, and whether the program builds on participating center's comparative advantages. Moreover, it will include questions on progress against commitments; whether assumptions underlying program theory of change hold or have been appropriately adjusted; questions on partnerships for efficient and effective program implementation and on embedding results in the context of the users and beneficiaries; on evidence of outcomes and impacts from past research; and likelihood of outcomes and impacts from current research. Organizational aspects include fitness for purpose of the current governance, management and accountability structures and systems of the CRP for efficiency and effectiveness.

Program results

11. A CRP evaluation will provide an overview and critical analysis of outputs, outcomes and impacts to date, and make an assessment of whether the CRP is 'on track' in terms of progress and adjustments to the program design, as needed. Today's outcomes and impacts mainly result from research started many years ago, and today's primary research may not lead to widespread impacts for another 10 or 20 years[2]. Moreover, only a part of research leads to successful results, and only a proportion of current research lines that are successful are likely to lead to widespread adoption, outcomes and impacts. Although research by nature is risky, it may also have very high pay-off and thus a few very successful research lines may well be enough to repay the entire CRP investment[3].

---

[2] Plant breeding, for instance, may involve multiple steps of development of genetic materials and methodologies for researching them, crossing, selection and field testing by the CGIAR and subsequently by the partner, taking 10-15 years before a variety is released after which further steps are needed before a farmer has access to the seed. Benefits from the new variety could take several more years to be observed, particularly in scale.

[3] This statement should not be taken to imply that the effectiveness of other CRP research investments should not be evaluated. However, in general, funders do need to take a 'portfolio approach' to investment in research, allowing for a balance of risks and returns, rather than expecting 100% success with all planned outputs. See also: Walker T., Maredia M., Kelley T., La Rovere R., Templeton D., Thiele G., and Douthwaite B. 2008. Strategic Guidance for *Ex Post* Impact Assessment of Agricultural Research. Report prepared for the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment, CGIAR Science Council. Science Council Secretariat: Rome, Italy. http://ispc.cgiar.org/system/files_force/ISPC_SPIA_StrategicGuidance.pdf?download=1

12.   An evaluation will, for example:

i.   synthesize and critically analyse information on outputs reported by the CRP, and outcomes and impacts documented through a range of adoption, outcome and impact studies carried out by the CRP, Centers, the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment of the CGIAR (SPIA), or externally, and other relevant studies which point to effectiveness and influence of the CRP;

ii.   comment on the feasibility of the initial design and expectations of the CRP, examining method and assumptions used in the initial impact pathway analysis and theory of change, checking if the assumptions still hold good and to what extent they are adjusted in light of accumulated new evidence; and checking if the potential for impact remains as originally foreseen. Evaluation should include pertinent information on probable changes in the wider context for the research;

iii.   partnerships and the quality of work with partners, including with other CRPs and other parts of the CGIAR system, as well as external research partners for enhancing the quality of science and the capacity of partners and for embedding the research in the appropriate user context for maximizing uptake;

iv.   Relate direct research results to the resources used.

Program organization

13.   CRP evaluations will also investigate whether the CRP's organizational structures and systems are functioning effectively and efficiently, or need improvement. Evaluation can usefully cover areas such as:

i.   structures and processes – for example lines of accountability from operations to governance, processes for planning, staff performance management and support services;

ii.   partnerships and the quality of work with partners, including with other CRPs and other parts of the CGIAR system, as well as external research partners;

iii.   financial management;

iv.   the CRP's own monitoring and evaluation systems (including audits): their quality, coverage and use (including in management decisions).

14.   Note that some systems (such as finance, procurement, asset management, etc.) will principally be assessed by auditors, and these assessments are inputs to evaluation.

Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement

CGIAR

Roles and responsibilities in CRP evaluations

15.   CRP evaluations are complex, multi-stakeholder exercises and it is important that roles and responsibilities be clear and clearly communicated to all involved, in the first instance by the Evaluation Manager. Typical roles are listed in **Error! Reference source not found.**.

Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement
CGIAR

Table 1: Roles and responsibilities in a CRP evaluation

Role	Who	Responsibilities
Evaluation commissioning body	IEA Office	• plan and manage the design of the evaluation; • prepare Evaluation ToR; • engage and manage the evaluation reference group; • contract and pay the evaluators; • support the team leader in preparing the Inception Report, brief evaluators and provide them with logistical support; • compile documentation and data, including pre-analysis, put evaluators in contact with key people, troubleshoot emerging problems and conflicts; • give feedback on reports, manage feedback to draft report and follow-up processes including communication events; • submit Evaluation Report, management response and Consortium Board commentary to Fund Council.
Evaluation manager	IEA officer	• primarily responsible for the above; • principal point of liaison with the Evaluation Team; • responsible for quality assurance throughout the evaluation process.
Evaluation reference group	A wider group of key stakeholders (typically 6-10)	• engage at regular intervals, comment at key stages of the evaluation. These will normally include: the ToR, the Inception Report, early findings as well as the draft final report.
Evaluation team	Independent team of evaluators	• work as a team to plan and conduct the evaluation; • gather and analyse data, information and perceptions; • contribute to written reports and presentations of findings, under the direction of the team leader.
Evaluation lead	Evaluation team leader; a senior specialist experienced in	• further develop the evaluation design as lead author of the Inception Report;

Role	Who	Responsibilities
	evaluation and with understanding of agricultural research for development	• lead the evaluation and the evaluation team and the production of reports; • lead author on the Evaluation Report and main presenter of findings and conclusions; • principal point of liaison with the Evaluation Manager and CRP management.
CRP management	CRP leader	• inform CRP staff and partners about the evaluation; • suggest members for the reference group; • coordinate accumulation and preparation of CRP data and information during the entire evaluation process; • help connecting with stakeholders; • allocate adequate time and resources for staff to engage with evaluators; • provide information, support in logistics, develop a management response; • help communicate findings and lessons, and act on accepted recommendations.
CRP staff	Team leaders and lead researchers in particular	• collaborate with evaluators in providing information.
Key informants	Broadly representative group of partners, donors, other stakeholders and experts	• engage in the evaluation insofar as practical, sharing information and expressing their views.
External quality assurance	Independent experts contracted by and reporting to Head of IEA External panel of subject matter experts contracted by IEA	• advise on evaluation quality on Inception Report and final draft report; • commentary on the quality of the final draft report regarding the soundness of the evaluation content and recommendations.

Planning ahead for CRP evaluations

16.   CRP evaluations need to be planned and budgeted well in advance. Planning will take place through a dialogue between the IEA Evaluation Manager and CRP management, and plans and budgets will be incorporated into the overall IEA workplan. Three important aspects to consider are timing, funding and information needed.

Timing

17.   Timing of CRP evaluations is influenced by the schedule of CRP funding cycles and the timing of the System-wide evaluation. There needs to be sufficient but not too long interval (4-6 years) between evaluations of any CRP, and it is desirable that all CRPs are evaluated during the interval between two System-wide evaluations. Within these restrictions there is relatively limited flexibility for the timing of CRP evaluations. The main activities and timing are shown in Table 2.

18.   Given the time needed for each CRP evaluation and the overall workload of the IEA, it is desirable that evaluations are sequenced with 3-4 CRP evaluations carried out in any one year. Although it is not practicable to time all or a large number of evaluations prior to short-term funding decisions, their recommendations can be followed-up at any key decision points following the evaluation. In addition, evaluation findings are expected to feed into the regular CRP management decisions[4].

Table 2: Main activities and timing for a CRP evaluation

Main activities for a CRP evaluation	Indicative time to allow #	Timing ahead of and during CRP evaluation (for start of process)
Planning for evaluation in the CRP Planning CRP-commissioned studies, and including relevant studies in the IEA workplan, as well as data to be collected by monitoring systems	**3 months**	At initiation of CRP or immediately following a CRP evaluation
Oversight of evaluation in the CRP Regular interaction between IEA and CRP management, to discuss progress on CCEEs and commission any		Every 2 years

---

[4] In its 8th meeting, the Fund Council instructed the IEA to organize evaluations of all CRPs within 2014-15, some of them through a special, "lighter" arrangement, in order to have evaluative information available before the 2nd call for CRP proposals. This staggering of 15 CRP evaluations to be conducted in a very short period is unlikely to become a norm.

Main activities for a CRP evaluation	Indicative time to allow #	Timing ahead of and during CRP evaluation (for start of process)
additional studies needed		
Designing the CRP evaluation • Developing a reference group • Reviewing evaluative material (including studies above) • Identifying members of the evaluation team • Developing initial set of the evaluation questions and general approach • Finalizing the Terms of Reference	6 months	1 year before the evaluation inception phase begins
Evaluation contracting • Contracting the evaluation team • Organizing logistics	2 months	4 months before evaluation inception phase begins
Evaluation start-up and inception phase • Briefing the evaluation team • Development of Inception Report with refined set of evaluation questions and approach in detail • Finalizing logistics for main phase	2 months (1 month) (1 month)	At least 12 months before Evaluation Report is due
Collection of information by evaluators	5-6 months	
Evaluation Reporting • Sharing initial findings and getting feedback • Drafting main report and getting feedback on it • Final report and recommendations	3 months (1 month) (1 month) (1 month)	
Management response to Evaluation Report and recommendations, and action plan • To be developed by CRP management, CRP governance body and lead-Center Board	1 month	Within 1 month after final report
Consortium Board response on Evaluation Report and recommendations, and CRP management response, and approval	1 month	Within 2 months after final report

Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement

CGIAR

Main activities for a CRP evaluation	Indicative time to allow #	Timing ahead of and during CRP evaluation (for start of process)
Fund Council consideration of CRP Evaluation Report, CRP management response and Consortium Board commentary • For endorsement of recommendations • Consideration and endorsement of management action plan	**1-2 months**	Depending on timing of Fund Council meeting after final report
Dissemination • Dissemination events • Brief of Evaluation Report translated to relevant languages		

Notes on Table 2: #   Times can be shortened, with experience, but these are not unrealistic for complex multi-stakeholder evaluations, especially in early years.

Funding of CRP evaluations

19.   CRP evaluations are funded under the IEA budget. The cost of a CRP evaluation will vary depending primarily on the size of the evaluation team, the extent of site visits and data collection requirements. It should remain below 1% of the total budget of the program being evaluated. The budget consists of consultant (team and expert panel), travel and report dissemination costs. Evaluation may also involve workshops for stakeholder engagement, the logistical arrangements of which are included in the evaluation budget. Face-to-face events organized by the CRP for disseminating Evaluation Report and findings are borne by the CRP.

20.   It is foreseen that as credible and validated evaluative information and study results become available, the work and budget requirement of CRP evaluations will somewhat diminish.

21.   CRP evaluations also generate transactions costs (time and other costs) to participating Centers and their partners. These can be kept to minimum by careful planning, and systematic communication about data and information needs. Development of the CRPs' own data and record systems, and good M&E system is expected to help reduce the costs of preparing for and participating in evaluations.

Independent Evaluation Arrangement

CGIAR

Planning for evaluation information

Data and information needs

22.   CRP evaluations are in-depth studies of large and complex programs and their information and data needs are substantial. As they are conducted over a relatively short period and with limited resources, the evaluators have limited possibilities to collect data, particularly concerning past performance. Evaluators, instead, rely on evaluative information coming from the CRP's own M&E systems and CRP information management systems.

23.   Evaluations also need substantial information on program content and operations, including comprehensive information on program approval/renewal processes, program design, project portfolio, decision making records and financial data.

24.   The data and information on past performance include records, performance data on indicators, findings and conclusions from evaluative studies and documented evidence of results. For the summative part of the evaluation, evaluators should be able to conduct meta-analyses and synthesise validated information and studies. In the absence of such information, evaluators need to opt for methods of information gathering that are feasible, and provide certain amount of validation themselves of information that is available from the CRP.

25.   The CRP monitoring systems that the CRPs are in the process of setting up can provide information needed in evaluation. However, these systems are currently variable and mostly weak. As part of the preparation for CRP evaluations, good communication is needed on how best to manage the information collection for the key evaluation questions. This is particularly important when the monitoring information base remains weak, but goes beyond what the CRP M&E systems can provide. Developing of M&E systems for CRPs and the CGIAR are a high priority, including: collection of the monitoring information needed to assess progress and achievements; and reasonable coverage and quality of the CRP's own evaluations.

26.   Evaluations benefit greatly from studies of adequate quality commissioned by the CRPs themselves as part of the CRP's M&E system. Such studies may also be conducted by external groups. Typically these will include:

- CRP-commissioned external evaluations (CCEEs)
- adoption studies
- impact assessments

Clear impact pathways for the CRP research

27.   As part of program design, the CRPs are expected to have developed impact pathways and theories of change for the key components of the CRP[5]. An important task of the evaluation team is to assess the adequacy and validity of the impact pathways, and of the assumptions underlying the theories of change and the extent to which the program is adjusting its design on basis of research results and lessons learnt. Furthermore, against a valid program design, the evaluation can assess whether the CRP is on track and causes for any deviation. Due to restrictions of resources and the complexity of the CRPs, the evaluators cannot construct a detailed impact pathway in case it doesn't exist and the team needs to assess progress against milestones and general program objectives.

Evaluations carried out by CRPs and partners

28.   Under the new Policy for Independent Evaluation in the CGIAR, CRP management will work with the IEA to plan a limited number of CCEEs, as key building blocks for the evaluation of the whole CRP. Also, these evaluations will rely on specific studies documenting past results (adoption, outcomes and impacts) for their summative part[6].

29.   Other studies commissioned by the CRP and studies conducted by donors can also contribute valuable information to the overall evaluation of CRPs. The literature review for the CRP evaluation will look at these, assess their coverage and quality, and extract lessons.

30.   The IEA will discuss with CRP management the studies planned, completed and underway by the CRP well in advance before the CRP evaluation, and discuss how to fill any gaps in coverage, including by commissioning additional studies. Any gap filling studies should be conducted 1-2 years before the CRP evaluation begins. Establishing an evaluation library for each CRP evaluation helps coordination of document gathering and access to them.

Maintaining an archive of key studies and decision documents

31.   Annex 1 lists some of the documents that CRP evaluators will need to access. Some of these will be studies commissioned by the CRP, while others will relate to explaining historical decisions, e.g. records of key meetings or key policy documents which guided CRP

---

[5] For definition introduced in the CGIAR, see
http://ispc.cgiar.org/system/files_force/ISPC_WhitePaper_TOCsIPs.pdf?download=1
[6] Due to tight CRP evaluation schedule in 2014-15, development of the CCEE-based building block system and use of CCEEs in CRP evaluations will become more systematic in the future.

Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement

CGIAR

iea.cgiar.org

or research programme decisions at the start. CRP managers are recommended to keep an 'evaluation file' for those key documents that pertain to the CRP.

Designing and managing a CRP evaluation

Designing the evaluation

The initial design process

32.   The responsibility for the initial evaluation design is with the designated Evaluation Manager in IEA. However, as the CRP evaluations are to a large extent serving similar purpose and similar audiences, the general evaluation design is largely consistent across all CRP evaluations. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the evaluation summarize all the aspects of the evaluation.

33.   In the evaluation design process it is important to clarify both the aspects that are consistent across all CRP evaluations and those specific to each CRP evaluation. The aspects that are largely consistent across CRP evaluations include:

a)   main target audiences and use of the evaluation;

b)   generic questions to be addressed under each evaluation criterion;

c)   approaches to the evaluation at a generic level;

d)   expected evaluation products;

e)   general skills and qualities needed in the evaluation team;

f)   key stakeholders in the evaluation and their involvement.

34.   Some of the aspects where CRP evaluations are likely to differ include:

a)   scheduling that may depend on certain conditions, such as major decisions or events;

b)   specific evaluation questions;

c)   Specific skills needed in the evaluation team;

d)   data availability and need for any additional information or case studies as part of the main evaluation

35.   The IEA Evaluation Manager will normally take the following actions at the initial stages in designing the evaluation:

a)   establishes regular communication with CRP leadership early on;

b)   sets up a reference group for the evaluation. The reference group for a CRP evaluation will normally include representatives of at least: the CRP and lead Center

governing body, CRP management (one or more Centers), key research partners, and other stakeholder groups such as donors. It may possibly include someone representing views of the intended beneficiaries. The Evaluation Manager will be the coordinator of the reference group;

c) drafts initial set of evaluation questions for the standard evaluation criteria (relevance, quality of science, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability). While the evaluation team is expected to refine the set of evaluation questions a preliminary set is aimed to maintain consistency across CRP evaluations and ensure that important aspects of evaluation are not missed out;

d) identifies key stakeholders for the evaluation, both within and outside the CGIAR;

e) prepares a background analysis of the program design and its evolution;

f) decides on the skills and other characteristics required by evaluators and the evaluation team as a whole;

g) based on the above analysis and following a consistent format developed for CRP evaluations, the Evaluation Manager will prepare the ToR for the evaluation. The reference group will be able to comment on the draft ToR. However to ensure independence, the final decision will rest with the Head of IEA.

36.   The CRP evaluation ToRs follow a consistent form across all CRP evaluations.

37.   The evaluation team leader will have an important role in the design of the evaluation during the inception phase (see section on inception Phase). The evaluation questions, evaluation approach, methods and tools to be used are presented in the ToRs at a generic level, and are specified in the Inception Report, which is the team leader's responsibility in consultation with the evaluation manager.

Selecting and contracting evaluators

38.   The Evaluation Manager will take the lead in selecting and contracting evaluators. Identifying evaluators is carried out through a combination of calls for expression of interest and targeted search in evaluation and research networks. The selection of team is based on a variety of criteria including extensive evaluation expertise, strong academic and research background, excellent understanding and knowledge of agricultural research related to CGIAR research programs.

39.   In developing a pool of potential evaluators, the Evaluation Manager may ask for inputs from the reference group. After the evaluation team leader has been selected the team leader will be consulted in selecting the rest of the team. However, the final decision regarding team membership will rest with the Head of IEA. Before contracting evaluators,

each candidate must submit to the IEA office their signed declaration of interest and code of conduct form[7].

Managing the Evaluation Process

Engagement with the Evaluation Reference Group

40.   The composition of the Evaluation reference group (RG) is proposed by the CRP leadership and members are invited by the Evaluation Manager. The aim of the RG is to ensure good communication with, learning by, and appropriate accountability to primary evaluation clients and key stakeholders, while preserving the independence of evaluators. The RG can be thought of as a 'sounding board', giving views and inputs at key decision stages in the evaluation design and implementation process. The group may also play an important role in leading evaluators to key people and documents, and representing the views of other stakeholders. The key stages when the RG is informed of, or involved in, the evaluation include: finalizing the ToRs, seeking potential evaluators, finalizing the Inception Report, sharing preliminary findings, and when the draft of the final report is available.

Briefing the evaluators

41.   The Evaluation Manager will be responsible for briefing the evaluators at the beginning of the contract, providing them with the key documents that are the responsibility of the IEA and coordinating access to the documents that the CRP and the Consortium Office will need to provide.

42.   This Guidance Note 1 and the Standards for Independent External Evaluation in the CGIAR are included among the initial briefing documentation. The evaluators also need to be briefed about the ethics expected in CGIAR evaluations as detailed in the Standards for Independent External Evaluation in the CGIAR).

Inception phase

43.   The CRP Evaluation begins with an inception phase (indicatively, this may be about two months). This is for the independent evaluation team leader with support of the IEA manager to design the evaluation in detail. Analysis and preparation that influences the evaluation design may include:

---

[7] http://iea.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/interest%2Bcode.pdf

Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement

CGIAR

iea.cgiar.org

a) examining the quality and coverage of the CRP's own monitoring, review and evaluation system, and the extent to which the CRP evaluation can draw on it and whether there are important information gaps;

b) reviewing key documents as a basis for identifying any important issues which might be addressed during evaluation. This material may include previous evaluations and CCEEs of the CRP (or EPMRs of Centers) and other CRPs, the CRP proposal and any subsequent modifications, and initial appraisal documents and comments on the CRP by the Independent Science and Partnership Council of the CGIAR (ISPC) and others;

c) meeting for face-to-face briefing and planning of the evaluation, and for preparing an evaluation workplan detailed in the Inception Report;

d) conducting preliminary interviews with program management and other key informants knowledgeable about the program representing different stakeholder groups.

44.   The Inception Report adds specificity to the ToR regarding evaluation questions, approaches and methods, and schedule of the evaluation, including field visits. It provides detail on each team member's specific assignment in the evaluation. Changes to the ToR considered necessary .

45.   The Inception Report is a key document in the evaluation because it will be the main point of reference for managing the process. Key components of the Inception Report include:

a) brief description of the CRP being evaluated and analysis of the external and internal context within which the evaluated is conducted;

b) detailed plan on how each evaluation criterion is being addressed and list of main evaluation questions. These should include key issues specific to the CRP identified through analysis of the context, and engagement with key stakeholders, including CRP staff and reference group;

c) a detailed description of the approaches to be used, data collection methods and tools and why they were chosen, a sampling plan if appropriate, and resource requirements;

d) a detailed evaluation matrix;

e) an updated table of deliverables and dates;

f) an explanation of any changes made from the original ToR, if these are judged necessary;

g) a communications checklist.

Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement

CGIAR

46.	While the Inception Report requires inputs from the evaluation team members, the final report is the responsibility of the team leader, who finalizes the report in consultation with the Evaluation Manager. The final Inception Report will be discussed with CRP management. Feed-back will also be sought from the reference group, as well as from any other key stakeholders considered important.

47.	The final agreed Inception Report will form the basis for implementing the evaluation. The Inception Report is a public document to be placed at the IEA Web site and communicated to evaluation stakeholders.

Field visits

48.	Field visits are a key part of the evaluation methodology for observing activities in the research sites, collecting and validating information mainly through observation and interviews and getting feed-back from partners. Some important aspects of planning field visits include:

   a)	clarity and transparency about needs and objectives;

   b)	selection of countries/locations based on clear criteria;

   c)	selection of sites within locations based on clear criteria (to the extent logistics allow);

   d)	consistency across different visits and different team members conducting visits regarding data and information to be collected and means to collect them;

   e)	ethical manner in collecting and using information (see Evaluation Standards);

   f)	efficiency in terms of resources and transaction costs for those involved.

49.	Field visits can pose heavy demands on the time and resources of researchers and partners as well as the evaluation team. Therefore it is important that, to the extent possible, the evaluators clarify in the inception phase what information will need to be collected through field visits that cannot be reasonably collected in any other way, including what categories of people will need to be interviewed and how they will be selected.

Support to the Evaluators

50.	The Evaluation Manager will play a key role in supporting the evaluators and ensuring that the evaluation runs smoothly. The Evaluation Manager is supported by an evaluation analyst at the IEA. Common tasks to the evaluation include:

   a)	contributing to the development of the draft Inception Report in support of the evaluation team leader;

Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement

CGIAR

b) helping evaluators make initial contact with CRP managers and other key stakeholders. (Note that the evaluators are ultimately responsible for the list of people consulted);

c) supporting evaluators to obtain key documentation, where they require internal help to obtain this;

d) supporting the evaluation by organizing data and information and conducting preliminary descriptive analysis on data, such as on projects and finances;

e) helping with logistical planning;

f) providing comments and quality assure on the Inception Report;

g) supporting evaluators with any health, safety and security issues;

h) handling inter-personal problems. Working intensely together to tight deadlines can lead to stress and arguments in the evaluation team, and sometimes between the team and other stakeholders. It is the responsibility of the team leader to manage and resolve any differences. However, if the team is failing to work well, the Evaluation Manager may have to assist with mediating the situation. In extreme cases, the Evaluation Manager may need to consider renegotiating or rescinding contracts;

i) supporting the evaluators by preparing information for tables, figures and annexes (however, the evaluators are responsible for drafting the Evaluation Report);

j) commenting on early draft documents before these are circulated for comments;

k) safeguarding the team's independence and integrity, which includes declining tasks that go beyond the support role into conducting assessment.

Preliminary findings

51.   Presenting early findings to CRP management is an essential part of the evaluation process. It allows evaluators to cross-check facts and perceptions, for CRP management to have early information on key issues for a timely response, and for discussing potentially sensitive issues. For accountability and transparency purposes, it is important that attempts are made to discuss findings at the end of field and center visits with those stakeholders most involved.

52.   Webinars can be used for discussing early findings with the reference group and other stakeholders.

Reporting

53.   The process or report finalization and approval of CRP Evaluation Reports is presented in detail in Guidance Note 6.

Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement

CGIAR

54.   The Evaluation Report is the main output of the evaluation. The draft Evaluation Report, including the draft recommendations, is circulated for comments and factual checking to CRP management who can consult with selected staff in the CRP and Center staff. The IEA submits the draft also to external evaluation peers for improving evaluative quality and to an Expert Panel, if deemed useful, for comments related to the subject matter. However, it must be clear that evaluators are independent in drawing the final conclusions and recommendations.

55.   Evaluation recommendations should be clearly supported by the analysis of the evaluation evidence, action-oriented, practical and specific, and - where possible – with clearly-defined responsibility for each action. Although there is no set limit on the number of recommendations, they should be focused on a practical number of priority issues to be addressed mainly by management or governing bodies.

56.   Communication is not confined to writing the report and disseminating it. The process of communicating with stakeholders throughout the evaluation is vital to learning and improvement on all sides. It helps improve openness to dialogue, challenges preconceptions and makes it possible for those being evaluated to take on board and respond to the preliminary findings before the Evaluation Report is finalized and in the public domain. The reference group is one important vehicle for such communication, but other key stakeholders must also be kept in the loop. A communications checklist is helpful and it should be included in the Inception Report.

Quality assurance throughout the evaluation

57.   The IEA Evaluation Manager has the primary responsibility for quality assurance during the evaluation to ensure adequate conformity of the evaluation process and products with the Evaluation Policy and Standards.

58.   All evaluations are subject to quality assessment. There are three mechanisms for quality assurance. Firstly, the Evaluation Manager is responsible for quality assurance during the entire process including reporting (both inception and final report). Secondly, external evaluation peers are asked to provide feed-back on evaluation quality through the IEA at the inception and draft final report stages. Thirdly, an External Panel, commissioned by the Head of IEA, can be used to provide a commentary on the research and development aspects of the draft final report. If an Expert Panel is engaged, its commentary is attached to the final report. Quality assurance across evaluations is done periodically to ensure and improve consistency in their quality, approach and presentation.

Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement

CGIAR

Finalization and approval of CRP Evaluation Reports

59.   The management response to the Evaluation Report and its recommendations is the responsibility of the CRP management. The lead-Center Board and the CRP governing body (bodies) will contribute to preparing the CRP management response and action plan.

60.   The Evaluation Report, together with the CRP management response and action plan, will be considered by the Consortium Board and Consortium Office, who will prepare a response and approval of the CRP evaluation and CRP management response. Subsequently the IEA will submit the three documents: CRP evaluation, CRP management response and action plans, and Consortium Board/Consortium Office response to the Fund Council through the Fund Office, for the Fund Council's consideration and endorsement.

Publication and dissemination

61.   The final report will be published on the IEA website and circulated widely. Specific means of dissemination for key stakeholders may be considered. This includes preparation of an evaluation brief that may be translated into languages other than English. It may also include webinars and presentations to specific audiences.

Follow-up to the evaluation

62.   CRP Management should produce a follow-up report every year, which will include a matrix on progress in the implementation of the action plan until the progress is complete. The follow-up report should be reviewed and approved by CRP governance, Lead Center Board, and any other unit or component responsible for the actions in the action plan.

Annex 1: Checklist of useful documents for CRP evaluations

Document(s)	CRP	IEA	Consortium Office
			To be provided by:
1. ToRs for the CRP Evaluation		X	
2. Evaluation Standards and Guidance Note 1 on CRP Evaluations		X	
3. Most recent CRP Evaluation (if available)		X	
4. Most recent EPMR report of lead Center and key partner Centers (if relevant)		X	
5. Tracking document for actions taken in response to the last CRP Evaluation (if available)		X	
6. Key policy documents for the CGIAR, both current and those which were influential at the start of the CRP, e.g. Strategic Results Framework			X
7. Approved CRP proposal and any revision documents	X		
8. Appraisal documents for the CRP – including comments by ISPC and the Fund Council			X
9. Financial, administrative and human resource records	X		
10. Key strategy and other documents relating to the CRP, participating Centers and other strategic partners in the CRP			X
11. Information on CRP projects and activities (for all types of funding) corresponding with the CRP structure.	X		
12. Information from CRP monitoring system including milestones by Flagship Project and Cluster of Activities and comprehensive list of outputs	X		
13. Annual reports for the CRP for the period being evaluated, and any other relevant monitoring reports (e.g. reports for particular research programs)	X		
14. Paper prepared by CRP management and steering committee on main changes in CRP research design since approval of most recent proposal..	X		
15. Brief presentation of the CRP's current theory of change, impact pathways and IDOs			
16. The current organization chart, with a brief description of the CRPs management structure, including the composition and terms of reference of each major committee	X		
17. CRP-Commissioned External Evaluation Reports	X		
18. Donor commissioned external review and Evaluation Reports	X		
19. A narrative prepared by CRP management specifying the claims for results from the CRP research regarding uptake, use and adoption	X		

of and influence by CRP research results, and outcomes and impacts to which CRP research has contributed. The narrative should be accompanied by ex-post studies or other evidence supporting the claims.			
20. Relevant evaluations from other CRPs		X	
21. Other relevant reviews or evaluations (for example thematic evaluations) involving the CRP		X	
22. The latest Annual Funding Request	X		
23. Reports of major planning, management or expert meetings, etc., which have had a major influence on the direction of specific CRP programs, in particular records of the meetings of CRP management, CRP governance and lead-Center Board.	X		
22. Most recent internal and external audit reports	X		

Source: Adapted from Science Council and CGIAR Secretariat (2006): Guidelines for Conducting External Program and Management Reviews (EPMR) of the CGIAR Centers

Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement

CGIAR

The IEA has issues the following Guidance Notes:

Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement

CGIAR