



INCEPTION REPORT

August 2016

Evaluation of the “Strengthening Impact Assessment in CGIAR” (SIAC)

Project Phase 1, 2013-16



Julia Compton
Timothy J. Dalton
Sophie Zimm



Independent
Evaluation
Arrangement

This evaluation has been commissioned by Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (of ISPC) and is managed by the Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA) of CGIAR.

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List of Acronyms

BMGF	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
CO	CGIAR Consortium Office (replaced by the System Management Office on 1 July 2016)
CGIAR	No longer an acronym. Used to stand for Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research
CoP	Community of Practice
CRP	CGIAR Research Program
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DIIVA	Diffusion and Impact of Improved Varieties in Africa Project (BMGF funded) DG
EIAC	Evaluation and Impact Assessment Committee IACoP
Eoi	Expression of Interest (for a competitive grant)
epIA	ex-post Impact Assessment
FC	Fund Council of the CGIAR (replaced by the System Council on 1 July 2016) FAO
IA	Impact assessment
IEA	Independent Evaluation Arrangement of the CGIAR IAFP
ISPC	Independent Science and Partnership Council of the CGIAR
LSMS-ISA	Living Standards Measurement Survey – Integrated Surveys on Agriculture of the World Bank
LTLS	Long-term large scale ex post IA studies
MSU	Michigan State University, USA
NARS	National Agricultural Research System NRM(R)
POR(IA)	Policy-Oriented Research (Impact Assessment)
RCT	Randomised Control Trial (experimental method of impact assessment)
RRO	Regional Research Organisation
SC	System Council of the CGIAR (replaced the Fund Council)
SIAC	Project: Strengthening Impact Assessment in the CGIAR
SMB	System Management Board (SMB) of the CGIAR (replaced the Consortium Board)
SPIA	Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (of ISPC)
STMS	Short-term micro scale impact studies using experimental & quasi experimental methods
Tbc	to be confirmed
ToR	Terms of Reference
VOIP	Voice Over Internet Protocol (Skype or similar)

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This is an evaluation of the first phase of SIAC: a major project on ‘Strengthening Impact Assessment in the CGIAR’, managed by the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA). The evaluation is being commissioned and financed by SPIA, and the Independent Evaluation Arrangement of the CGIAR (IEA) has been requested to manage it in order to ensure evaluation independence.

The aim of this inception report is to set out the current understanding of the evaluation team of the Terms of Reference, and to set out our proposed approach to the evaluation.

Background, objectives and scope

The SIAC project is structured around four main work programs, with four main objectives:

- Objective 1 (Methods): *Develop, pilot and verify innovative methods for collection and assembly of diffusion data*
- Objective 2 (Outcomes): *Institutionalize the collection of the diffusion data needed to conduct critical CGIAR impact evaluations.*
- Objective 3 (Impacts): *Assess the full range of impacts from CGIAR research*
- Objective 4 (Building a community of practice): *Support the development of communities of practice for ex post impact assessment within the CGIAR and between the CGIAR and the development community more broadly.*

SIAC is managed by the SPIA¹ and has an independent Project Steering Committee (PSC) chaired by the SPIA Chair. SIAC has a number of external partners and contractors; the largest is Michigan State University, which manages Objective 1 and significant components of Objective 2.

SIAC started in December 2012. Funding for SIAC Phase I is US\$11.9M, principally financed by BMGF and DFID, along with some core funding from CGIAR funding Window 1 via the Independent Science and Partnership Council.

This evaluation has two main objectives:

- for SPIA to demonstrate accountability to SIAC donors
- to contribute to a better understanding of SPIA’s contribution to the CGIAR

Based on a recommendation from the SIAC Internal Mid-Term Review (SIAC, 2015), SPIA is in the process of preparing a SIAC Phase II proposal, which may be considered by the new CGIAR System Council in the autumn of 2016. Therefore, timing is tight for the evaluation.

We have defined the *primary users* for this evaluation to be: SPIA and the ISPC, the donors

¹ Throughout the document, ‘SPIA’ refers jointly to both the Standing Panel of experts and the SPIA Secretariat.

supporting SIAC, and the CGIAR System Council, in considering the proposal for SIAC Phase II. There are a number of other important stakeholders, including CGIAR Center Directorates and CRP leaders, and their Impact Assessment Focal Points, but these primary users will be our main target audience and we hope that they will be most actively engaged in the discussions about findings and recommendations.

SPIA has allocated the entirety of its yearly budget between 2012 and 2016 to SIAC, so that SIAC and SPIA are closely intertwined. For this reason, the evaluation will take into consideration broader questions that affect the future of SIAC, such as the role and comparative advantage of SPIA (see page 11). However, this is an evaluation of SIAC and not of SPIA/ISPC.

Evaluation approach and questions

The Terms of Reference sets out evaluation questions under four areas. Some sub-questions were slightly modified during the inception phase after discussion. The final list of questions follows:

A. Relevance and project design

A1: How relevant is SIAC for SPIA's mandate, ISPC mandate and the goals of the CGIAR?

A2: To what extent does the design of SIAC address the demand for reliable information on impact from donors and other key stakeholders?

A3: To what extent does the design of SIAC address the objective of developing a strong impact assessment culture in the CGIAR?

B. Quality of science

B1: Do the IA methods developed under SIAC (Objective 1) reflect state of the art quality of science?

B2: Do the processes of designing, selecting and managing the impact assessments and technical studies being carried out under SIAC promote high quality?

C. Effectiveness

C1: To what extent have outputs been produced as planned under each Objective?

C2: To what extent has there been progress towards meeting the four Objectives of SIAC and which activities have contributed most?

C3: What are the main enabling as well as constraining factors which explain the project's achievements (or lack of)?

C4: Has the program made appropriate adjustments (in terms of activities and management) in response to changed circumstances?

D. Governance and management

D1: Are the human and financial resources of the project adequate, and used efficiently?

D2: To what extent has the PSC been effective as a mechanism for guidance and oversight?

D3: To what extent have the partnership and contractual arrangements with regard to project components been efficient and effective?

The evaluation matrix (Annex 1) is the heart of this inception report. It sets out the evaluation questions from the ToR, together with our proposed approach to answering each: the proposed basis of evaluative judgment, the indicators, and the data sources.

The evaluation will take a theory based approach in seeking to clarify and test the logical linkages between the SIAC project inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes, and to investigate the assumptions and risks. We have highlighted the need to revisit the project logic model (See [Figure 2: Summary logic model for the project](#)).

The evaluation will use a variety of methods to answer the evaluation questions, in particular semi-structured interviews of SIAC management, grant recipient and other stakeholders; review of a sample of SIAC funded projects, short self-evaluation exercises; and observation of key SIAC meetings, with focus group discussions with Impact Assessment Focal Points and collaborators (see next paragraph). The evaluation team consists of two independent evaluators, supported by an evaluation analyst attached to the team by IEA.

Key dates and activities in the evaluation include:

- 18 July – 10 Sept (approx): Interviews and possible minisurvey (1-2 questions)
- 29-31 July: Evaluation team observes Boston SIAC meetings of the SPIA Impact Assessment Focal Points (IAFPs) and Mid-term Workshop for SIAC Obj 3.2; focus group meetings
- Sept 11: Draft main report deadline
- Sept 12-13: Main findings submitted to ISPC (possibly presented at meeting)
- Sept 16-28 (tbc): Draft report and recommendations circulated for comments to primary users
- Sept 30, 2016: Final report deadline

1. Introduction

1.1 Origins, purpose and users of the evaluation

This is an evaluation of the first phase of SIAC: a major project to strengthen impact assessment in the CGIAR.

The evaluation is being commissioned and financed by SPIA, who have asked the Independent Evaluation Arrangement (IEA) of the CGIAR to manage it in order to ensure evaluation independence.

The evaluation has two main objectives according to the Terms of Reference, ToR:

- for SPIA to demonstrate accountability to SIAC donors (primary purpose)
- to contribute to a better understanding of SPIA's contribution to the CGIAR. Specifically: "the evaluation will draw lessons and make recommendations that will inform the second phase of SIAC and, more generally, advise on future directions of SPIA".

Based on a recommendation from its internal Mid-Term Review, SPIA is already preparing a Phase II proposal for SIAC to begin in mid-2017, with a re-prioritized set of activities². While the evaluation team will be working, SPIA will in parallel be sketching out plans for future work for a proposal to be considered by the new CGIAR System Council in the Fall of 2016. Therefore, timing is tight for the evaluation to be able to influence the design.

1.2 Stakeholders and primary users of the evaluation

The main stakeholders in the evaluation, according to the ToR, are:

- CGIAR donors and particularly the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and DFID;
- SPIA (PSC, members and secretariat),
- the ISPC;
- sub-grantees of the SIAC program at universities and CGIAR Centers; and
- the wider community of leaders of the CGIAR Research Programs (CRP leaders) and researchers.

Additional important stakeholders identified in inception phase discussions include:

- CGIAR Center Directorates and Boards
- Independent Science Committees of the CRPs
- CGIAR Impact Assessment Focal Points
- The newly-constituted System Council and its Strategic Impact, Monitoring, and Evaluation Committee (to be established)
- The newly-constituted System Management Board and its Strategic Impact, Monitoring, and Evaluation Committee (to be established)

² The SIAC Internal Mid-Term Review (SIAC, 2015) concluded that "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."

- The Independent Evaluation Arrangement, which uses results of SIAC/SPIA's work in its evaluations of CRPs and thematic work

Indirect stakeholders include:

- other communities of practice within the CGIAR related to impact assessments as well as RBM/MEL, and
- the international impact assessment community, which has some overlapping functions with SPIA (for example capacity development methods development and identification of research gaps): for example 3ie, ATAI, ACIAR's impact assessment unit, EMBRAPA's SGI, J-PAL, CLEAR and the Development Impact Lab. This group may be important because the ToR requests us to look at comparative international efforts to strengthen impact evaluation.

After discussion, we have defined the **primary users** for this evaluation (for the purposes of utilization-focused evaluation, see page 12) to be **SPIA and the ISPC, the donors supporting SIAC, and the System Council**, in considering the future priorities for SPIA and the proposal for SIAC Phase II. There are a number of other important stakeholders, but the primary users will be our main target audience and we hope that they will be most actively engaged in the discussions about findings and recommendations.

1.3 Purpose and structure of the Inception Report

The main purpose of the inception phase is for the independent evaluation team to develop and propose an approach to the evaluation, and then to reach agreement on the approach with the commissioners of the evaluation, subject to quality assurance, and incorporating the views of stakeholders, in particular the Project Steering Committee.

For this purpose, the inception report sets out the understanding and proposals of the independent evaluation team, in particular regarding:

- The purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation, its target audiences and use (this Section);
- The evaluation questions (EQs) to be answered, and the proposed approach to answering each evaluation question and sub-question, in particular the basis of evaluative judgment and the sources of evidence (Sections 4-6 and Annex 1); and the
- Evaluation work plan (Annex 3).

2. Background

2.1 The CGIAR institutional context

According to its website³, the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) is "a sub-group of the CGIAR Independent Science and Partnership Council (ISPC), which has an advisory role, primarily to CGIAR members (a group of 68 countries and funders⁴) through the Fund Council⁵, on issues relating to the quality, relevance and impact of CGIAR research activity". SPIA's mandate is:

To provide CGIAR members with timely, objective and credible information on the impacts at the system level of past CGIAR investments and outputs

To provide support to and complement the [CGIAR] Centers in their ex post impact assessment activities

To provide feedback to CGIAR priority setting and create synergies by developing links to ex ante assessment and overall planning, monitoring and evaluation functions in the CGIAR

The ISPC has the primary mandate for ex-ante review of the CGIAR research programmes (CRPs), and the link between SPIA/SIAC ex-post analysis and the ex-ante analysis will be an area for investigation in the evaluation.

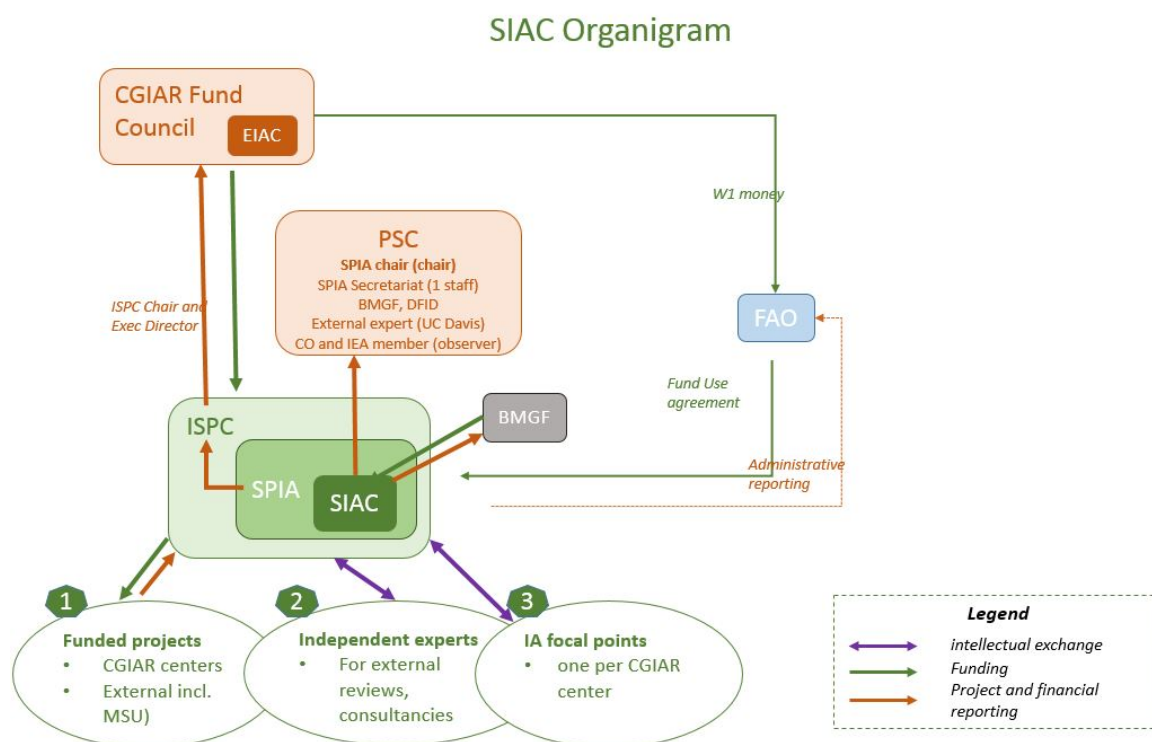
Figure 1 depicts our current understanding of how SPIA and SIAC fit into the CGIAR system, with the main lines of funding and reporting shown. SIAC reports directly to BMGF for the use of its project funds, and through ISPC for the use of Window 1 funding, including the DFID 'special project' for SIAC. Administratively, W1 money is channeled to SPIA/SIAC through FAO, and contracting systems also follow FAO rules.

³ <http://impact.cgiar.org/about> accessed 7/7/16

⁴ We could not locate an up to date list of members. CGIAR(2011) lists 64 members in 2009, including 25 developing countries. More recent documents refer to funders rather than members.

⁵ Replaced by the CGIAR System Council on 1 July 2016

Figure 1: Preliminary organogram of SIAC and SPIA in the CGIAR (Phase I)



Source: Evaluation team, based on discussions with SPIA. PSC = Project Steering Committee; EIAC = Evaluation and Impact Assessment Committee of Fund Council; MSU = Michigan State University. For others see List of Acronyms. Note that this diagram is preliminary and needs some adjustments in the final evaluation report, for example to reflect: funds flowing to SIAC from BMGF through the Consortium Office (now System Office); DFID as a funder of SIAC through the Fund Council; and additional IAFPs representing CRPs.

The CGIAR has undergone significant reforms in the last ten years, and is currently undergoing further reform, with the creation of a new System Council and System Management Board as of July 1 2016, replacing the Fund Council (shown in the diagram) and Consortium Board. This provides some opportunities to clarify or tighten up institutional linkages, including the position of SPIA and ISPC.

2.2 Overview of SIAC

The timeline in Annex 6 gives details of the context and key milestones for the SIAC project. In brief:

- The project was set up in response to perceptions expressed by donors that the data on CGIAR impact was inadequate both in quality and quantity. Prior to this, funding to SPIA had been relatively low. SPIA's budget was under \$250,000 a year until 2009, and dominated by a single large project (DIIVA, with over two thirds of the SPIA budget) from 2010-13 (Table 1).
- The SIAC project started in November 2012 with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (to date totaling US\$ 5.2M), managed through the CIAR Consortium.

Additional funding from DFID (to date totaling US\$ 4.5M) started in 2014, channeled through the Fund Council (as a ‘Window 1 special project’) and managed through FAO.

- Since the SIAC project started, SPIA has allocated its total budget from all sources, including ISPC, to the SIAC work programme (Table 1)⁶.
- SIAC is managed by the SPIA Secretariat (three staff members with total of 2.25 FTE as well as consultant contributions). Michigan State University is subcontracted to lead many of the activities under SIAC objectives 1 and 2.
- A Project Steering Committee (PSC) oversees SIAC. It is chaired by the SPIA Chair and includes the SPIA secretary (secretary to the PSC), a representative of the Fund Council (now System Council) and from the Consortium Office (now System Management Office), an external independent expert, an observer representative from the grant recipient institution or its designate and the Head of the IEA (also as observer).

Table 1: SIAC and SPIA funding, 2007-2016

Year	Total SPIA budget (USD 000)	Funding source		
		ISPC core budget	DIIVA project	Additional SIAC funds*
2007	210	100%		
2008	143	100%		
2009	143	100%		
2010	1,126	25%	75%	
2011	1,234	31%	69%	
2012	1,192	29%		
2013	1,951	32%		68%
2014	4,011	12%		88%
2015	3,914	18%		82%
2016	2,417	21%		79%

*BMGF project and DFID Window 1 special project

Source: SPIA

2.3 Project goal and objectives

The overarching (long-term) project goal is “to contribute to poverty reduction, food security, nutrition and health, and sustainable natural resource use **by improving knowledge and understanding concerning the impacts of international agricultural research**” (SIAC 2012, p.2).

⁶ ISPC contributes in the region of half a million dollars a year (so the variability in its percentage mainly reflects the variable project funding, including from SIAC). This includes also the time of SPIA Chair, SPIA Members, SPIA Secretariat staff. The main personnel costs charged to the project in 2015 were for the Financial and Administrative Coordinator for the project and two SIAC Research Associates.

More specifically, the project proposal states (SIAC 2012, p.2): “... the program’s success may be judged by two key indicators:

- An expansion of the available set of impact studies, providing useful and credible information to guide future investments in the CGIAR.
- CRPs and Centers of the CGIAR have institutionalized impact assessment such that ex post impact assessment is regarded as an essential part of prudent research management for accountability purposes and as an input to ex ante strategic planning.”

The SIAC Project proposal (SIAC 2012, p.3) further argues that SPIA has three major areas of comparative advantage, which SIAC will work to strengthen. These are:

- “Public goods for the impact assessment community of the CGIAR, for example new metrics and measures; open access databases; quality assurance and training impact assessment specialists.
- Coordination: identifying gaps in the research base, promoting harmonisation of methods and definitions so research is comparable; central point of information exchange for studies
- Synthesis and Overview studies such as meta-analyses and less formal reviews”

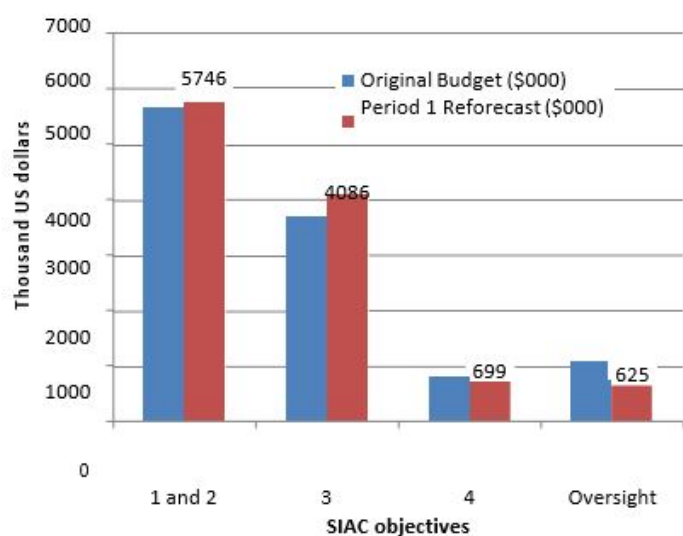
The project is structured around four objectives, each with numerous activities (see Annex 5 for full list):

- Objective 1 (Methods): Develop, pilot and verify innovative methods for collection and assembly of diffusion data
- Objective 2 (Outcomes): Institutionalize the collection of the diffusion data needed to conduct critical CGIAR impact evaluations.
- Objective 3 (Impacts): Assess the full range of impacts from CGIAR research
- Objective 4 (Building a community of practice): Support the development of communities of practice for ex post impact assessment within the CGIAR and between the CGIAR and the development community more broadly.

Table 2 shows project expenditure to date by main objective⁷. As might be expected, the bulk of the expenditure is on studies, under objectives 1-3.

⁷ The Progress Narrative for 2015 did not include budget per objective. That is why the 2014 report is being used.

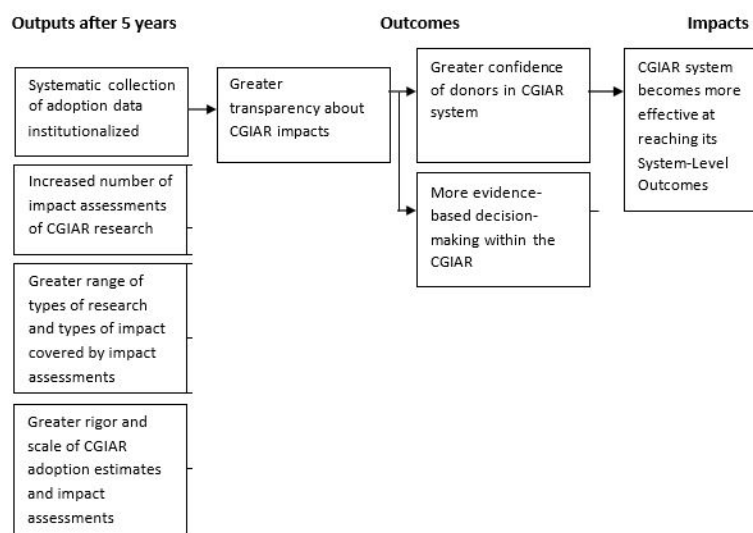
Table 2: SIAC Phase 1 budget by objective



Source: SIAC Progress Narrative to BMGF (2014)

The logic model for the project is depicted in Figure 2 below, and some of the key indicators of success are listed in Annex 1 (Question C2). For the BMGF, the project has produced a detailed results framework for reporting against selected outputs, outcomes and milestones (Annex 7).

Figure 2: Summary logic model for the project



Source: SIAC Proposal (Word version) p. 24

In the view of the evaluation team, the logic model depicted, and the indicators in the proposal, form an inadequate basis for theory-based evaluation. The overarching logic model is missing testable links and indicators that form an essential basis for decisions about SIAC activities and priorities. Furthermore, a number of the indicators of success are not stated in a measurable

fashion, for example: “Adding to the body of knowledge on the impact of agricultural research on poverty, food security, nutrition and the environment on different target groups”. The BMGF results table (Annex 7) has more detail, but still has some areas with lack of clear links, and some unclear indicators. Neither framework specifies key assumptions and risks.

An important first step for this evaluation will therefore be to work with the SPIA team to produce a more detailed theory of change that makes more explicit and detailed linkages and identifies assumptions and risks more clearly. However, there are some limitations of time and availability for doing a complete Theory of Change for all the activities in SIAC (see page 17) so we will take a pragmatic approach, selecting some activities to explore in further detail (see page 15, pt g).

3. Scope of the Evaluation

SIAC is still a young programme, with less than two years of full funding for some of the first phase activities. The evaluation is thus predominantly formative (learning) although there is a summative (accountability) element.

Because SIAC and SPIA are closely interlinked (indeed, indistinguishable as regards their workplan and budget), the scope of the evaluation will go beyond SIAC-funded activities to consider broader questions about the role and comparative advantage of SPIA, and how governance of SIAC links with wider SPIA governance. However, this is an evaluation of SIAC and not of SPIA/ISPC, so will not be able to fully address these broader questions.

The main timeframe to be considered is the SIAC Phase I (2012-16). However, as well as looking at the quantity and quality of SIAC outputs, we will attempt to put them in context by looking at SPIA’s work pre-SIAC and at efforts to strengthen impact evaluation outside the CGIAR.

4. Evaluation criteria and questions

4.1 Modification to the ToR

As mentioned above, SIAC is closely intertwined with SPIA. For this reason, the evaluation ToR initially asked us to “draw lessons and make recommendations” not only to “inform the second phase of SIAC” but also “more generally, advise on future directions of SPIA”.

However, after discussion during the inception phase, this objective was modified. The forthcoming IEA evaluation of ISPC (planned for 2017) will consider wider questions of the mandate of SPIA, the governance of ISPC and links between ISPC and SPIA in depth. The emphasis of the current evaluation is on whether the SIAC programme is meeting the needs of the system and is in line with SPIA’s mandate. Nevertheless, as outlined below, we will raise any broader issues which arise in the course of this evaluation.

4.2 Strategic issues to be considered

A number of strategic questions were raised for our consideration by the SPIA Secretariat and some other key stakeholders interviewed in this short inception phase. The evaluation team agrees that these are important issues and we will consider them, but we are not likely to come to definitive answers given the limited scope and other limitations of the evaluation (see above and also page 17).

These are:

1. Who are the main audiences for impact assessment of CGIAR research (donors/research leaders/others), what uses do they currently make of the information, and what types of information do they need as priority? (for both accountability and learning)
2. What is SPIA's comparative advantage / role in the CGIAR as a basis for leading the SIAC program? For example, should it lead in all of the following areas: functions of coordination, synthesis, overview and quality control, capacity development in IA, direct commissioning of IAs, development of baselines, and production of new methods and metrics? What alternatives have been considered?
3. What is SIAC's theory of change? How can the links and assumptions be tested?
4. What are the key priorities of SPIA and is the balance of effort across SIAC activities reflecting that?
5. How do the governance mechanisms of SIAC and SPIA interrelate, and who has (or could have) responsibility for strategic oversight?
6. Finally, should SIAC concentrate on strengthening impact assessment *in* the CGIAR or *of* the CGIAR? These imply different priorities.

4.3 Evaluation criteria and questions

The six main CGIAR evaluation criteria will be addressed as follows. The Evaluation Matrix, Annex 1 contains more detail of each evaluation question, proposed bases of judgement and indicators.

- a) **Relevance** (Evaluation matrix, Questions A1- A2): will be examined both from the perspective of stakeholder (in particular: primary user) demand for SIAC outputs, and from the perspective of project design: the clarity, logic, realism and coherence of the Theory of Change. This includes the relevance of specific activities to the four identified SIAC objectives (in the TOC), and the relevance of the four objectives themselves to the mandate of SPIA and demand from primary users.
- b) **Quality of science** (Questions B1-B2): The quality of science review will follow IEA guidelines and consider inputs, processes of management of SIAC-funded research activities and also outputs to

the extent possible⁸. We are also considering gender, equity and ethics issues under the quality of science heading. The review will examine whether studies being funded are likely to lead to defensible and replicable outputs; whether study designs and protocols include appropriately-disaggregated data and approaches for gender and equity; and whether research is conducted in a manner consistent with ethical principles, including ‘human subjects’ protocols. Much of the review will focus upon the SIAC process of research commissioning, review of Expressions of Interest and Proposals, and other types of SIAC added value such as matchmaking between CGIAR and other research partners. It will also look at design quality of the research proposals accepted for support by SIAC (including testable hypotheses, and (where already underway) the conduct of research. The review will also take into consideration qualitative information obtained through interviews with scientists who are contracted to undertake research and those in charge of research management. Some of the studies (for example in the natural resource management area) have recently been contracted and interviews will be essential to assess quality of science processes and potential outputs.

- c) **Effectiveness** (Questions C1-C4): Regarding outputs, we will rely largely on synthesizing project monitoring information, but we will seek to triangulate reported results for a small sample of activities, and explore the reasons for successful or delayed delivery, and any unexpected results. Regarding outcomes, we will identify evidence for and against the logical links and assumptions in the project theory of change.
- d) **Efficiency**: This will be investigated via specific issues such as resources and their allocation (Question D1) systems of governance and management (Question D2); and partnerships and contracting (Question D3). We will aim to highlight any major sources of inefficiency, and to the extent possible, benchmark research costs with those of similar impact assessments undertaken elsewhere.
- e) **Impact**: While SIAC itself works far upstream, it envisages two main paths to impact (SIAC proposal p. 5 and program logic model, Figure 1): (a) more evidence-based decision-making in the CIAR, through “providing strategic feedback to help steer system-level priorities; and building capacity within the System to undertake regular impact studies for monitoring how well implementation of the new research portfolio aligns with System-Level Objectives” and (b) maintaining funding to CGIAR research, through increasing donor confidence via “supplying donors and other stakeholders of the CGIAR with up-to-date evidence of the efficacy of investing in international agricultural research”. We will examine whether the links and assumptions in SIAC’s theory of change hold, and search for evidence that SIAC has contributed to its wider objectives (Question C2).
- f) **Sustainability** – will be examined from several angles, principally by looking at the quality and sustainability of partnerships for impact (Question D3) and the CGIAR community of practice for impact assessment, but also covering issues of financial sustainability if they arise (Question D1). Environmental sustainability is not a main focus of this evaluation, but we will systematically look

⁸ There are as yet very few peer-reviewed manuscripts and presentations that lend themselves to a bibliometric assessment.

for potential environmental implications in the sampled research projects and highlight any issues that arise.

5. Evaluation approach and methods

5.1 Evaluation approach

The evaluation approach is 'utilization-focused' in the terminology of Michael Quinn Patton (Patton and Horton, 2009; Quinn Patton, 2008), that is, it aims to be useful to decision-makers through a joint learning process, and by producing practical recommendations for actions that can build on program successes and address weaknesses. This means taking a structured approach to regular consultation with **defined "primary users"** of the evaluation (Quinn Patton, 2002) to ensure that the evaluation both starts and stays relevant to decision-makers throughout. We have defined the **primary users** in this evaluation as the decision makers on SPIA and in particular SIAC Phase II⁹. There are also important secondary users (see page 4), so early and accessible communication of emerging findings and recommendations will be important.

Other aspects of this approach are:

- Prior agreement on the basis on which the evaluation team will take judgements, rather than these being up to the individual judgement of evaluation team members. Specifically, this involves the presentation of the proposed bases of evaluative judgement in the Evaluation Matrix (Annex 1) for discussion with key stakeholders.
- Timing the evaluation to key decisions on the future of SIAC.
- The project team produces some key information (for example the project timeline in Annex 6) and self-evaluations, with triangulation/verification of the results by the evaluation team.
- Building on previous knowledge, rather than simply "discovering" and reiterating problems of which the project team is well aware.

In examining the impact pathways that underlie SIAC and its individual activities, we will draw on theory based evaluation. It is too early to test outcomes of the program, but we will aim for agreement on a testable theory of change with view to future use of the 'contribution analysis' approach developed by Mayne and already applied in the CGIAR (Mayne, 2008, 2012).

The evaluation aims to contribute to both learning and accountability.

- a) Learning processes will be promoted by close working with the SPIA team and consultation with other key stakeholders.
- b) The main locus of accountability identified in the ToR is the SIAC project funders: for the responsible and cost-effective use of funds to produce agreed outputs and immediate

⁹ The **primary users** for this evaluation are the SPIA team, the ISPC, the donors supporting SIAC, and the System Council, in considering the future of SPIA and the proposal for SIAC Phase II (see page 1).

outcomes. However, SPIA potentially has multiple lines of accountability (Whitty, 2008), including

- (formal) to the System Council (formerly, Fund Council): to carry out work of identified highest priority and reflecting SPIA's agreed mandate.
- (informal) To research partners: to follow international principles of good partnership.
- (informal) To people participating directly in SIAC-commissioned research (e.g. farmers, traders, consumers, households): to follow ethical principles – for example informed consent, transparency and good communication, and sharing relevant results.
- (formal and informal) To the international research community and users of research: responsible publication (including negative results) and increasing data transparency according to the CGIAR policy on open data (CGIAR Consortium, 2013).

We will not be able to look at all of these lines of accountability in depth in this short evaluation, but we will highlight any issues that arise.

5.2 Evaluation methods, tools and analysis

The Evaluation Matrix (Annex 1) sets out for each evaluation question and sub-question:

- the proposed basis of evaluative judgement;
- together with the metrics/ issues to examine for each; and
- the proposed sources of information

The main sources of information will be:

- a) Document review. The SPIA team have provided a full set of SIAC documents through a shared Dropbox. We are also collecting other relevant documents – for example on other impact evaluation initiatives.
- b) Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders. We have been provided by SPIA with an initial stakeholder list of 47 people, and we are using “snowballing” to identify other people that are considered important by key stakeholders interviewed. We will aim to interview a sample of the above stakeholders, representing different areas, but availability is likely to be a key constraint (see ‘Limitations’ section). We will also purposively select people to interview who have been identified by stakeholders as ‘thought leaders’ in this area.

Interview protocols (available from the evaluation team on request) will be based closely on the questions in the evaluation matrix, but we will also allow flexibility and space for interviewees to raise their own issues and concerns.

- c) Observation of key SPIA/SIAC meetings. We are attending two key meetings in Boston (the first for IAFPs, the second for research collaborators) and will observe them as well as interviewing people in the breaks.

- d) Focus group: If time permits (under discussion), we will carry out a focus group discussion with impact evaluation focal points and SIAC collaborators, in Boston or by conference call.
- e) Self-evaluation: We are asking the project team to reflect, discuss and provide information on various aspects, for example key events in the life of the project (Annex 6); reasons for success, failure and course changes (that have also been documented in the annual reports, for instance to Gates); and the Theory of Change. We will use these as a basis for assessment, along with triangulation from other sources.
- f) Surveys: At the moment we do not plan any surveys, due to timing of this evaluation and a sense of ‘survey overload’ in the CGIAR. However, depending on our early findings, we may send a ‘mini-survey’ of one or two questions to some groups (e.g. Center and DG directors).
- g) Sampling of activities and research proposals:
 - We will examine SIAC calls (and associated documentation including reviews), research proposals, and other activities from the perspectives of quality and partnerships (see Evaluation Matrix). We are still examining the numbers involved and it is possible we will look at all of them. If we need to sample, we will use a stratified random sample based on clear criteria.
 - We propose to select a few SIAC activities to look at in more detail, in response to the ToR. We have suggested criteria and a process for selecting these: a shortlist developed by SPIA on the basis of agreed criteria, then a random sample within this (Annex 1 Question C1 final column, and Annex 5).
 - For stakeholders to be interviewed, we are using “snowballing” to get a wider sampling frame and ensure that we are not limiting ourselves to interviewees recommended directly by SIAC (to avoid the perception of possible bias). The sampling of stakeholders will be limited by their availability (see page 17). However, insofar as possible, we will aim to sample a representative sample of people representing different types of stakeholders.

5.3 Data management and analysis

Templates, checklists and guidelines will be used for all document reviews and interviews. All data collection instruments will be available on request from the evaluation team, once they have been finalized.

Quantitative scores (if any) will be summarized - mainly as percentages with averages and ranges; qualitative observations will be summarized as appropriate to the data. For semi- structured interviews, findings from each question and respondent will be recorded by the interviewer in a standard format. Important findings will be cross-checked with interviewees, normally by email.

All data and documents collected, including interview notes, are being systematically filed by the evaluation team and held securely in an invitation-only on-line Dropbox. This ensures that confidential information such as interview data will not be shared with SPIA/SIAC. Bibliographic references are uploaded to a shared Zotero group for reference management; non-confidential references will be shared with SPIA.

There will be regular communication within the team to resolve any methodological questions emerging, and team members will have a challenge function for each other, as a precaution against bias or ‘jumping to conclusions’.

The final report will make reference to the sources and any known limitations of the evidence.¹⁰

5.4 Main limitations of the evaluation

The main limitations and proposed measures for mitigation are:

Theory of change: SIAC does not have a fully-developed ToC (see page 8), and there was insufficient time to produce one in the short inception phase. Theory-based evaluation requires a clear and detailed ToC, and the lack of one poses a risk to the proposed analysis of SIAC’s contribution to outputs and potential contribution to outcomes.

- The evaluation team will work with SPIA and primary evaluation users (see page 4) to agree a more detailed ToC as high priority. However, we do not expect this to be an easy task, because it requires significant discussion and consensus, and the key people involved are spread across several continents. We will probably need to focus on the ToC for a few selected activity areas. This is, in our view, the main risk to producing a high-quality evaluation.

Timing: Timing is very tight for this evaluation. The main data collection period is mid-July to August, and many key stakeholders may be hard to pin down. There is a risk that some important stakeholders will be missed.

- The evaluation team will attend two key meetings of Impact Evaluation Focal Points and collaborators. The IEA and SPIA have also alerted key stakeholders early and are checking their availability for interviews. (However, few have replied.)

Stakeholder engagement: Timing also affects the number of stakeholders who can be consulted and severely limits their opportunity to comment on evaluation findings and recommendations, as the periods for consultation are very short. In addition, senior staff in the CGIAR are under immense pressure at the moment, due to the finalisation of phase II CRP proposals, and the new structural reforms, and have already expressed to IEA that they have little time to contribute to evaluations. There is a risk that some key stakeholders will feel that they have had an insufficient chance to express their views, and that some important ideas may be missed.

- The evaluation team, SPIA and IEA will make every effort to communicate to key stakeholders, in a brief and accessible manner, the key decisions to be taken as a result of this evaluation and any important emerging findings and recommendations; and will solicit their inputs. However, this is still a potential limitation.

¹⁰ In the interests of readability of the main report, most data will be presented in annexes and extensive use will be made of footnotes/endnotes

6. Organization and timing of the evaluation

6.1 Team Composition and Responsibilities

The team is composed of two external consultants: Julia Compton (independent evaluation consultant), and Timothy Dalton (Kansas State University). Neither had any direct involvement in the design or implementation of SIAC and they both declare no conflict of interest. Sophie Zimm (IEA Evaluation Analyst) will be a third team member for the duration of this evaluation. Annex 4 gives more details on the team.

The evaluation matrix (Annex 1) shows the allocation of team member responsibilities against each evaluation question, and the workplan (Annex 3) shows the allocation of team members against specific proposed activities. Julia Compton, as team leader, has primary responsibility for managing the process and delivering the evaluation reports. Timothy Dalton, as impact assessment expert, is primarily responsible for assessing science quality (Questions B1 and B2) and analysis of project resources and their use (Question D1), but may contribute to all the aspects of the evaluation as time permits. Sophie Zimm will work primarily on documentation and data management, communication with stakeholders, sampling, data analysis and (if appropriate) surveys, but may contribute to all the aspects of the evaluation as time permits. The evaluation team leader has final responsibility for the evaluation report and all findings and recommendations, subject to adherence to CGIAR evaluation standards.

6.2 Management and governance of the evaluation

The IEA, in consultation with SPIA will be responsible for planning, supporting the initial design and management of the evaluation. The IEA will also be responsible for quality assurance of the evaluation process and outputs, through IEA internal quality assurance review, and dissemination of the results.

SPIA (Members and relevant ISPC Secretariat staff) commit to making all documents on the SIAC project available to the consultants in a Dropbox; will highlight a small sub-set of documentary evidence as being of highest priority for evaluation; and will respond to questions as soon as possible throughout the course of the evaluation.

6.3 Timeline

The table below (revised from the ToR) shows the main phases of the evaluation and Annex 3 contains a detailed workplan.

Table 3: Evaluation Timeline (short version)

Phase	Period (2016)	Main activities and outputs	Responsibility
Preparatory Phase	May-June	Terms of Reference Evaluation team recruited	IEA and SPIA
Inception phase Inquiry phase	1st week July July-August	Refine approach/methodology Interviews, desk review etc.	Evaluation Team Leader Evaluation Team
Reporting phase Drafting of Report	Mid Sept	Draft Evaluation Report Consultation on the draft	Evaluation team
Final Evaluation Report	End Sept	Final Evaluation Report	Team leader, IEA and SPIA

6.4 Deliverables and Dissemination Plans

The draft evaluation report will be shared with SPIA, PSC and other stakeholders for comments, and the draft evaluation findings and recommendations will be presented (virtually) at the ISPC meeting, mid September 2016, or to the ISPC at one of its own virtual meetings (via Webex) depending on completion of the report. The final report will be submitted to SIAC management, i.e., the PSC, for management response, and published.

References cited

Note: As mentioned in the text, SIAC has provided the evaluation team with a full set of project documentation. The list below only refers to external documents that have been cited in this report.

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[_in_impact_analysis_methods_for_ex-post_impact_assessments_of_agricultural_technology_Options_for_the_CGIAR/links/54aeab260cf2b48e8ed45938.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Elisabeth_Sadoulet/publication/228830375_Recent_advances_in_impact_analysis_methods_for_ex-post_impact_assessments_of_agricultural_technology_Options_for_the_CGIAR/links/54aeab260cf2b48e8ed45938.pdf).

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Quinn Patton M (2002) Utilization-Focused Evaluation (U-Fe) Checklist. Available from: www.wmich.edu/evalctr/archive_checklists/ufe.pdf.

Quinn Patton M (2008) Utilization-Focused Evaluation. Fourth Edition edition. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc

Annex 1. Evaluation Matrix

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	Proposed basis of judgement	Indicators (where relevant) or means of verification	Proposed information sources	Principal responsibility
A. Relevance and project design				
A1 How relevant is SIAC for SPIA's mandate, ISPC mandate, and the goals of the CGIAR?	Extent to which the project concept and activities respond to clear need and demand of the defined key stakeholders of SIAC including funders, System Council and Centers/CRPs	Recorded problem analysis linked to project conception (if possible, not just in project proposal). Evidence of big picture analysis - of CGIAR and relevant international initiatives - and consideration of alternatives. Evidence of past and current demand from key stakeholders	Project and other CGIAR documentation Records of meetings and decisions Stakeholder analysis Key stakeholder interviews/ survey (?) Staff/PSC interviews	JC/SZ
	Extent to which SIAC's strategy to address the need for strengthened impact assessment <i>in and of</i> the CGIAR is appropriate	SIAC is supporting SPIA to play an appropriate institutional role based on its own comparative advantage in the CGIAR and alternative means of achieving the objectives SIAC has a strong (clear, logical, coherent and realistic) and broadly agreed theory of change/logic model with assumptions and risks Assumptions in the logic model are holding true, and/or project has been modified appropriately to reflect changes in information on assumptions.	Interviews with / survey of IA and other key stakeholders (DGs etc) CGIAR reform and other documents Joint (participatory) review of ToC in light of experience, assumptions and alternatives. Develop full ToC / evaluation framework with assumptions and risks.	JC
			Analysis of alternative means of achieving the objectives, including other initiatives to strengthen impact assessment in international organizations.	
	The balance between different parts of the work is appropriate	The balance of work reflects the revised theory of change and the evaluation findings on relevance (in the judgement of the evaluators)	As above	JC

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EVALUATION QUESTIONS	Proposed basis of judgement	Indicators (where relevant) or means of verification	Proposed information sources	Principal responsibility
A2 To what extent does the design of SIAC address the demand for reliable information on impact from donors and other key stakeholders?	<p>Donors and other key stakeholders (below) are satisfied with balance of SIAC objectives and type of outputs planned to be produced through each activity area</p> <p>Evidence of use of SPIA /SIAC IA (or other IA) products in accountability and/or decision-making on priorities for research and development funding (or other evidence of learning if available):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - By Fund Council and Consortium - By individual donors - By Centers and CRPs 	<p>(a) Core SIAC donors and (b) Other interested CGIAR donors in broad agreement with balance of SIAC objectives, prioritization of activities within objectives, and progress to date on quantity and quality of impact information “Interested donors” are defined as those who filled out the questionnaire survey last time and supply a minimum of 10% of overall CGIAR funding.</p> <p>Documentary evidence (if any) of use of past SPIA or similar IA outputs in funding and/or decisions on prioritisation,</p> <p>Documentary evidence in CRP proposals and Center/CRP annual reports? (Citations of SPIA studies for their accountability)</p>	<p>2014 donor survey</p> <p>Donor/FC/DDG/CRP leader (sample) semi-str interviews and purposive search (request) for documentary evidence of use</p> <p>Other previous reviews</p> <p>Purposive search from paper trail of SPIA ex-post to ISPC ex-ante comments to FC decisions</p>	JC/SZ
A3 To what extent does the design of SIAC address the objective of developing a strong impact assessment culture in the CGIAR?	SIAC design reflects a clear analysis of objectives, needs, constraints and the role of other actors in developing an impact assessment culture	<p>Documentary evidence of analysis of needs and constraints</p> <p>Clarity about SIAC/SPIA’s role and comparative advantage</p> <p>Clear logic model which highlights risks and assumptions, including the role of others</p>	SIAC proposal and other SIAC documentation (IAFP meetings, for instance? Inception workshops and other formal/informal feedback and information exchange mechanisms?)	JC
B Quality of science				
B1 Do the IA methods (being) developed under SIAC reflect state of the art quality of science?	Evidence that methods being developed and tested under SIAC (e.g. Objective 1) are high quality science and making a relevant contribution to the field	Evidence of thorough literature review and justification; methods positioning; presentation of preliminary results and publications. Assess marginal contribution to diffusion/adoption data and impact assessment knowledge; citations where relevant and benchmarking insofar as possible	Process documents, strategy papers, presentations on open data, human subjects/IRB	TD/SZ

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EVALUATION QUESTIONS	Proposed basis of judgement	Indicators (where relevant) or means of verification	Proposed information sources	Principal responsibility
B2 Do the processes of designing, selecting and managing the impact assessments and technical studies being carried out under SIAC promote high quality? 10	Evidence of high quality following IEA framework for science quality: (inputs/ processes/ outputs wherever available). Processes for calls, selection and review promoting high quality Adequate processes for ethical review and training Adequate attention to gender and social equity	Evidence of thorough literature review (or other evidence of state of the art) and justification; methods positioning; topical appeal and need. Assess marginal contribution to diffusion/adoption data and impact assessment knowledge; citations where relevant. Accepted proposals reviewed for scientific methods – feasibility and appropriateness (of research design to questions, research questions to call objectives etc.); CVs; disciplinary mix; cost effectiveness where possible	Review of calls, EOIs, reviews and proposals. .	TD/SZ
C Effectiveness				
C1 To what extent have outputs been produced as planned under each Objective?	Output targets in the log frame fully / substantially achieved (taking into account agreed changes)	Recorded outputs and spot checks	Project progress reports. Triangulation through documentation and interviews Look in more detail at 1-2 activities (outputs and outcomes). Suggested criteria for choosing activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent different SIAC objectives (see left) • Represent a reasonable portion of SIAC budget (not small) • Currently envisaged to continue into Phase II Prepare a shortlist of all activities matching criteria (Annex 6), and	JC/SZ
C2 To what extent has there been progress towards meeting the four Objectives of SIAC and which activities have contributed most?	Extent to which there is evidence for links and assumptions in the theory of change. Contribution analysis where applicable. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1 (Methods): Develop, pilot and verify 	Indicators and milestones in the proposal are met (or appropriately revised): Two major outcomes: (i) an expansion of the available set of impact studies, providing useful and credible information to guide future investments in the CGIAR; and, (ii) a strong foundation for a more institutionalized approach to	Joint (participatory) review of ToC in light of experience and alternatives.	JC/TD/SZ

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EVALUATION QUESTIONS	Proposed basis of judgement	Indicators (where relevant) or means of verification	Proposed information sources	Principal responsibility
	innovative methods for collection and assembly of diffusion data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 2 (Outcomes): Institutionalize the collection of the diffusion data needed to conduct critical CGIAR impact evaluations. • Objective 3 (Impacts): Assess the full range of impacts from CGIAR research • Objective 4 (Building a community of practice): for ex post impact assessment within the CGIAR and between the CGIAR and the development 	data collection and impact assessment across a wide range of agricultural technologies Well established baselines for future impact assessment within a results-based framework. ☑ <i>High quality estimates of the economic impact of CGIAR technologies, institutional innovations and policies.</i> ☑ <i>Adding to the body of knowledge on the impact of agricultural research on poverty, food security, nutrition and the environment on different target groups</i> ☑ <i>Reliable knowledge of the poverty impact of crop improvement, natural resource management and policy research</i> ☑ <i>Strengthened capacity within the CGIAR at both Center and CRP level to conduct highly credible impact</i>		
C3 What are the main enabling as well as constraining factors which explain the project's achievements (or lack of)?	Factors arising from progress analysis (C2) .	May include for example: Funding timing Administrative processes Governance and management	Initial collection of views from project staff and PSC, triangulated from other sources (including SIAC progress reports), then cross checked.	JC/TD
C4 Has the program made appropriate adjustments (in terms of activities and management) in response to changed circumstances?	Also covered under A1 (changes in design)	Timeline and evidence on changes	Project staff produce initial version of timeline, discuss changes and why Triangulation by evaluation team as above.	JC/TD
D Governance and management				
D1 Are the human and financial resources of the project adequate, and used efficiently?	Budgets and allocations reasonable by international benchmarks	Summary figures aggregated by topical area; Benchmarking with international research proposals for similar work	SIAC Project proposal and budget; subaward projects and budgets; time allocation	TD

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EVALUATION QUESTIONS	Proposed basis of judgement	Indicators (where relevant) or means of verification	Proposed information sources	Principal responsibility
D2 To what extent has the PSC been effective as a mechanism for guidance and oversight?	Extent to which PSC promotes effectiveness in achieving above outputs and outcomes.	<p>PSC members and ISPC staff working on SIAC have clear, shared understanding of roles and responsibilities</p> <p>PSC members receive sufficient and timely information to make informed, strategic decisions.</p> <p>PSC decisions appropriately reflected in changes to project.</p>	Project documentation including ToRs and minutes of committees etc	JC/SZ
	Extent to which governance/ management structures of project promote transparency and accountability to key stakeholders.	<p>PSC fits appropriately into and communicates with wider governance structures for ISC and SPIA</p> <p>Key stakeholders satisfied with PSC role and communication</p>		JC
D3 To what extent have the partnership and contractual arrangements with regard to project components been efficient and effective?	<p>Project partners and contractors have clear, shared understanding about expected project outputs and outcomes and their respective responsibilities under the project to achieve these.</p> <p>Partners and contractors satisfied with systems, processes and communication</p>	<p>Partnership agreements and contracts contain (or attach):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear scope of work and deliverables - Clear timeline - Clarity on roles and responsibilities - Clarity on administrative and any other rules affecting use and reporting of funds - Clear procedures for dispute resolution <p>Interviews with SIAC and collaborators demonstrate clear shared understanding of objectives and outputs, and satisfaction with systems, processes and communication – including re any changes to work programs and other problem-solving.</p>	<p>Review of project design documents; progress and monitoring reports; contracting and reporting documents.</p> <p>Interviews with a sample of partners (as available). Short email survey to partners tbc.</p>	JC/SZ/TD

Annex 2. People met in inception phase

Tim Kelley *	Senior Research Officer, SIAC PSC & SPIA Secretary
Lakshmi Krishnan*	Research officer, ISPC and SPIA
James Stevenson	Research officer, ISPC and SPIA
Maggie Gill	Chair of ISPC
Leslie Lipper*	Executive Director, ISPC
Andrew Clayton	Social Development Advisor, DFID Research and Evidence Department. PSC and EIAC member
Nancy Johnson	Impact Evaluation Focal Point for IFPRI/A4NH
Rachel Sauvinet-Bedouin*	Head of IEA and Observer on SIAC PSC (as well as being manager of this evaluation)

Annex 3. Proposed Work Plan

PHASE and Task	Responsibility	July	Aug	Sept	Oct
INCEPTION					
Initial briefing visit to SPIA/SIAC and IEA	Evaluation team (JC)	30/6-1/7		Key to colours Activity Report or product Stakeholder comments requested by deadline shown	
Collection of documents and initial identification of key stakeholders	SIAC team and evaluation team (LK, SZ)	Shared drop box 1/7			
Draft Inception Report (IR)	Evaluation team (JC/TD)	8/7 Draft 0 for IEA			
Circulate Draft IR for comments	IEA (RB / SZ) and primary users	14/7 - 19/7			
Final IR	Evaluation team (JC/TD/SZ)	20/7			
MAIN PHASE					
Theory of change review (online discussion)	SIAC team and evaluation team (JC/SZ/TD)		Detailed ToC with assumptions and risks		
Review of outputs	Evaluation team (JC/TD/SZ)				
Science quality analysis	Evaluation team (TD)				
Interviews with key stakeholders (IAFPs, CGIAR staff, donors, partners, contractees etc)	Evaluation team (JC/TD)				
Document and evidence synthesis	Evaluation team (all)				
Observation of key IAFP /technical meetings and face to face interviews of IAFPs	Evaluation team (TD/JC)		29-30/7 Boston		
REPORTING					
Presentation of preliminary findings to ISPC meeting (and PSC)	Evaluation team (JC/ TD) by skype			PSC 8-9 tbc ISPC 12-13 Sept	

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Draft main report	Evaluation team (JC/TD/SZ)				15/9	
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PHASE and Task	Responsibility	July		Aug	Sept	Oct
Circulation and comments on draft	IEA (RB / SZ) and all stakeholders				18/9 - 25/9	
Final report	Evaluation team				30/9	
Management response	TBC - SPIA Chair/Sec?					Date tbc
Dissemination	IEA					
Final proposal due for next phase of SIAC	SPIA					Date tbc

Annex 4. Evaluation team composition

The external evaluation team is composed of Julia Compton, team leader (independent consultant) and Timothy Dalton, impact assessment expert (Kansas State University). Neither evaluation team member had any direct involvement in the design or implementation of SIAC.

Julia Compton's background is in agricultural research and rural development, predominantly in Africa. She then worked for ten years in the UK Department for International Development, first as a rural livelihoods adviser, and eventually as deputy head of evaluation. Since leaving DFID in 2010 she has worked as an independent consultant specialising in evaluation, agriculture and food security and rural development. Julia recently led the evaluation of the CGIAR Research Programme on Agriculture, Nutrition and Health (A4NH).

Timothy Dalton has extensive experience in agricultural technology adoption and his research focuses on the relationship between agricultural production, technological change and the environment. Timothy Dalton complements Julia Compton's institutional perspective and process evaluation skills with his technical expertise on impact assessment as well as a strategic perspective on the use of impact assessment in decision-making. His background is in agricultural economics. He is familiar with the CGIAR and has worked with FAO, USAID and USDA especially in the context of Africa. He is currently the Director of the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Collaborative research on Sorghum and Millet at Kansas State University.

Sophie Zimm of the IEA, an experienced evaluation analyst, will work closely with the external team. Prior to the CGIAR, Sophie worked in the evaluation departments of UNIDO and UNODC, and also gained experience in project coordination/management in Mozambique.

Annex 5. List of SPIA objectives and activity areas, with proposed criteria for shortlisting of sample for evaluation

See the Evaluation Matrix (Annex 2) Question C2 for more information.

Activity and Sub-Activities (as of July 2016)	Share of overall budget allocated (S <5% /M 5-10%/ L >10%)	Time undertaken to date Short <1 year since signature/start of first activity/med
OBJECTIVE 1 (Methods)		
Activity 1.1: Advance methodologies for tracking the uptake and adoption of improved varieties		
Activity 1.2: Develop protocols for tracking diffusion of natural resource management technologies		
Activity 1.3: New institutional approaches to collecting technology diffusion data		
Activity 1.4: Develop and disseminate best practices for collecting diffusion data		
OBJECTIVE 2 (Outcomes)		
Activity 2.1. Organize the collection of crop germplasm improvement research related direct outcomes		
Activity 2.2. Organize the collection of natural resource management (NRM) research outcomes		
Activity 2.3. Organize the collection of policy-oriented research outcomes		
Activity 2.4. Long-term institutionalization of collection of adoption data		
OBJECTIVE 3 (Impacts)		
Activity 3.0. Assessing the impacts of agricultural research on nutrition and health		
Activity 3.1 Long-term large scale (LTLS) IA studies		
Activity 3.2 Micro-scale impact studies using experimental and quasi-experimental methods		
Activity 3.3 Under-evaluated areas of CGIAR research		
Activity 3.4. Pre- and post-doctoral research fellowships	MERGED WITH 2.4	
Activity 3.5. Undertake a 'meta-analysis' of all recent (since 2000) large scale and credible		

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Activity and Sub-Activities (from Project Proposal – needs updating)	Share of overall budget allocated (S <5% /M 5-10%/ L >10%)	Time undertaken to date <1 year /1-2 yrs/ > 2 yrs	Currently envisaged to continue in Phase II (Y/N)
Activity 3.4. Meta-analyses at System level: various studies			
OBJECTIVE 4 (Community of Practice)			
Activity 4.1 Small grants			
Activity 4.2 Strengthening IA capacity in the CGIAR through new partnerships			
Activity 4.3 Biennial CGIAR conference on ex post impact assessment results and methods, held at a CGIAR Center			
Activity 4.4 Enhancing quality and rigor: Introducing a Star Rating System for IA studies			
Activity 4.5 CGIAR Impact Website			

Annex 6. Timeline of key events for SIAC Project, 2008-2016

Developed by the SIAC/SPIA team, 7 July 2016, and edited by the evaluation team, Draft to be completed for final report

Key changes in context	Year	Key SPIA and SIAC activities and milestones (SIAC activity numbers in parenthesis)
IAFP meeting in Brasilia: Growing dissatisfaction with state of evidence, including on adoption of modern varieties	2008	
	2009	Start of DIIVA project quantifying adoption of CGIAR varieties, supported by BMGF
De Janvry, Dustan and Sadoulet report (De Janvry et al., 2010) raises question of quality in impact assessments (selection bias) and recommends portfolio of RCTs	2011	
BMGF and other funders show interest in supporting large-scale program addressing weaknesses in evidence base and IA capacity within the CGIAR.	2012	New SPIA Chair (Doug Gollin) SPIA I initiates dialogue with the World Bank LSMS-ISA team to pilot joint collection of data on agricultural technologies SIAC proposal developed and approved for funding by BMGF MSU contracted to manage SIAC Objectives 1 and 2
Strong donor interest shown in the nutrition area	2013	SIAC starts, with BMGF funding. DFID supports SIAC, channelling funding through Fund Council Window 1 to FAO 2 new SPIA secretariat staff DFID and the PSC push SPIA to put as much of the SIAC portfolio through competitive processes as possible Call for EoIs on nutrition studies (new area for SIAC) Call for EoIs on capacity building Small grants program launched
	2014	Small grants program closed (high transaction costs) Call for EoIs on Experimental impact evaluations First scoping study on 'under-evaluated areas of CGIAR research' – irrigation & water management

Annex 7. SIAC Results table for BMGF grant

Vision of Success and the Most Significant Result of this Grant	We anticipate two 'most significant results' from this grant: (i) An expansion of the available set of CGIAR research impact studies, providing useful and credible information to guide future investments in the CGIAR; and (ii) CRPs and Centres of the CGIAR have institutionalized impact assessment such that ex post impact assessment is regarded as an essential part of prudent research management for accountability purposes and as a key input to ex ante strategic planning.
Connection to Relevant [BMG] Foundation Strategy	Of the three strategic areas that the Foundation makes grants in to achieve increases in agricultural productivity for poor smallholder farmers, our proposed program comes under the Research and Development investment area. It is at the intersection of much of this grant-making to the CGIAR, with the Foundations strategic interest in improving data on agricultural development – a topic that the Foundation’s president recently highlighted as critical during his address to the IFAD conference, and name-checked the CGIAR in doing so.

Objective #1	Develop, pilot and verify innovative methods for collection and assembly of diffusion data
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<i>We will complete these Activities</i>	<i>Key Milestone ?</i>	<i>Expected to produce these Outputs</i>	<i>Key Milestone?</i>	<i>Expected to contribute to these Outcomes</i>	<i>Key Milestone?</i>
Validate and verify existing data on crop genetic improvement		Benchmark established by using DNA fingerprinting to estimate levels of adoption of improved varieties for 2 crops in 2 countries in SSA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tested and validated innovations for tracking adoption of new technologies that enhance either accuracy or cost effectiveness become part of the standard measurement of adoption protocol by CGIAR	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Design and test new protocols for collecting data on diffusion of crop genetic improvements	Assessment of results from pilot testing new methods to track adoption of MVs (LSMS-ISA protocol; photo recognition, cell phone survey technique, DNA market analysis)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Greater confidence in the methods used by CG researchers to measure and track adoption
Develop and test appropriate protocols for measuring diffusion of improved crop, tree, soil, water and livestock/fish management practices	Assessment of results from pilot testing methods to track adoption of improved NRM practices (aerial photography, household surveys, community surveys)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Experiment with alternative institutional arrangements and new technologies for collecting data	Assessment of using new approaches, new tools and new institutional arrangements for collecting ag research diffusion data (private market research firms) completed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop and disseminate best practices for collecting diffusion data	Develop and disseminate best practices for collecting diffusion data;	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Objective #2	Institutionalize the collection of the diffusion data needed to conduct critical CGIAR impact evaluations				
<i>We will complete these Activities</i>	<i>Key Milestone ?</i>	<i>Expected to produce these Outputs</i>	<i>Key Milestone?</i>	<i>Expected to contribute to these</i>	<i>Key Milestone?</i>
Organise and institutionalise the collection and maintenance of crop germplasm improvement research related direct outcomes (following the DIIVA / TRIVSA projects structure)		Expert judgment data on varietal adoption collected on 109 crop x country combinations in: South Asia (45); South East and East Asia (64)		Greater awareness of the global extent of adoption of improved crop varieties	

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Organise and institutionalise the collection of natural resource management research (NRMR) related direct outcomes	Expert judgment data on natural resource management adoption data for 3 specific improved crop/soil management technologies and 1 livestock management technology in different locations in 5 regions (SSA, SA, SEEA, CWANA, LAC)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Improved capacity to collect data on the outcomes from natural resource management research, and from policy research	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organise and institutionalise the documentation of cases of CGIAR policy-oriented research influencing policy	One set of nominated case-studies on the influence of policy research (up to 3 per CGIAR center / CRP) reviewed, evaluated and rated by independent external committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Greater transparency about the outcomes from CGIAR research	<input type="checkbox"/>
Long-term institutionalization / exit strategy	4 pilot studies assessing the incorporation of adoption data modules into national agricultural census surveys (2 countries in S. Asia and 2 in SSA)	<input type="checkbox"/>		
		<input type="checkbox"/>		

Objective #3	Assess the full range of impacts from CGIAR research				
<i>We will complete these Activities</i>	<i>Key Milestone</i>	<i>Expected to produce these Outputs</i>	<i>Key Milestone?</i>	<i>Expected to contribute to these</i>	<i>Key Milestone?</i>
3 long-term large-scale ex post impact assessment studies launched following call for proposals		Economic, poverty, nutritional, distributional & environmental LTLS IAs of CGIAR research using high quality data & methods		Number of large-scale economic, social and environmental impact assessments of both CGI and non-CGI CGIAR research expanded	

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<p>2 short-term micro-level impact studies launched using experimental or quasi-experimental methods</p>	<p>2 evaluations of the impact of CGIAR research-derived technologies during early stages of adoption completed</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Greater rigor and scale of CGIAR adoption estimates and impact assessments</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Review of past efforts to measure/document impacts from under-evaluated areas of CGIAR research (e.g., irrigation management) and at least two new studies commissioned following competitive process</p>	<p>Inventory expanded and quality enhanced of ePIA in hitherto underevaluated areas of CGIAR research (policy, livestock, NRM and irrigation management research and in-situ conservation of biodiversity)</p>			<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>At least three new studies launched based around a post-doc or pre-doctoral student or professor on sabbatical, funded through a competitive process</p>	<p>Integration of a strong cadre of pre-screened, high quality pre-doctorate and post doctorate researchers into ePIA activity in the CGIAR research</p>			
<p>Undertake a 'meta-analysis' of all recent large scale and credible CGIAR ePIAs and estimate different overall B-C scenarios</p>	<p>Method and approach defined, all relevant (recent) large scale economic impact assessment studies collected and study authors contacted in preparation for conducting a meta-analysis of CGIAR impact assessments</p>			

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Objective #4	Support the development of communities of practice for ex-post impact assessment within the CGIAR and between the CGIAR and the development community more broadly				
<i>We will complete these Activities</i>	<i>Key Milestone ?</i>	<i>Expected to produce these Outputs</i>	<i>Key Milestone?</i>	<i>Expected to contribute to these</i>	<i>Key Milestone?</i>
Activity 4.1 Small grants allocated on request to support communities of IA practice within the CGIAR		15 small grants dispursed to CGIAR scientists per annum		In 2015, the majority of a sample of CGIAR scientists feel they have improved ability to carry out impact assessments (compared to baseline assessment in 2013, and covering skills and financial resources)	
Activity 4.2 Training courses offered for CGIAR scientists in specific impact assessment methods		20 CGIAR scientists trained in cutting-edge impact assessment methodologies per annum		In 2015, the majority of a sample of donors state that they feel they have improved ability to judge the quality of impact assessment in the CGIAR (compared to baseline in 2013)	
Activity 4.3 Biennial CGIAR conference on ex-post impact assessment results and methods, held at a CGIAR Center		75 scientists participate in a biennial impact assessment conference	<input type="checkbox"/>	The number of users of the impact website increases from 1000 per month to 2000 per month by end of 2015	

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<p>Activity 4.4 Published quality ratings of impact assessments carried out by the CRPs/Centers</p>	<p>At least 20 impact studies (target of 30) per annum are quality-rated and published on http://impact.cgiar.org</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Activity 4.5 Facilitate interactions with regional research organizations on ePIA and provide support services to RROs and NARSS</p>	<p>No specific (measurable) output</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Activity 4.6 Maintain and significantly enhance the CGIAR impact website as a one-stop shop on impact assessment activities</p>	<p>New features are added to http://impact.cgiar.org</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Activity 4.7 Support capacity development within the Consortium to facilitate and aggregate ePIA</p>	<p>No specific (measurable) output</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	