Review of CGIAR Management Response System to Independent Evaluations

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Table of Acronyms

AoW	Area of Work
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
BDP	Big Data Platform
EMD	Executive Managing Director
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IAES	CGIAR Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service
ICARDA	International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IPB	Integrated Partnership Board
ISDC	Independent Science for Development Council
KM	Knowledge Management
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
MAR	Management Action Record
MER	Management, Engagement and Response
MOPAN	Multilateral Organization Assessment Network
MR	Management Response
MSC	Most Significant Change
PCU	Project Coordination Unit
PPU	Portfolio Performance Unit
PRMS	Performance and Results Management System
QA	Quality Assurance
QOR4D	Quality of Research for Development
RAFS	Resilient Agrifood Systems
SG	Science Group
SIMEC	Strategic Impact, Monitoring, and Evaluation Committee
SME	Subject Matter Expert
TIsM	Tailored Indicators' Matrix
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group

Executive Summary

This review examines CGIAR's Management Response (MR) System to independent process and performance evaluations. Commissioned by the CGIAR System Council and executed by the CGIAR Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES),[1] this review is anchored in the IAES 2022-24 Workplan (2021; re-confirmed 2024), and was conducted by an external independent team. In its first assessment of CGIAR (2019), the Multilateral Organization Assessment Network (MOPAN), identified several weaknesses regarding accountability and follow-up, uptake of lessons and best practices measures. Since then, CGIAR went through major changes, resulting in a new Portfolio 2025-30, and a revision of organizational structure. During CGIAR's Portfolio 2022-24, the MR process and products were developed and operationalized.

In support of the CGIAR Evaluation Framework and Policy, the Management Engagement and Response (MER): Process and Performance Evaluations in CGIAR was developed to strengthen use and engagement with evaluations. Subsequently, the CGIAR internal Process Note was developed by the Portfolio Performance Unit (PPU) to help ensure that recommendations from independent evaluations are systematically tracked, addressed, and implemented. The PPU tracks and reports on MR implementation in January and June of each year. The annual CGIAR Internal Practice Change (Type 3) Report includes a section on the progress of implementation of MR actions. In Q4 of 2022, PPU established a MR Actions Tracking Tool (hereinafter referred to as MR Tracker) to track the status of implementing MRs to IAES' independent process and performance evaluations.

The review team adopted mixed methods design and a highly participatory approach, including a workshop to refine recommendations with key stakeholders. The review covers seven independent evaluations and reviews (2021 through 2024) within CGIAR's MR Tracker. Additionally, three Science Group (SG) evaluations were added which gave the opportunity to learn from the MR process in real time. The framework applied for this review is guided by MOPAN elements under the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) 8. The data collection process relied on a document review, on semi-structured interviews, and results from a survey that was conducted by IAES in 2024, addressing peer organizations, to explore evaluation practices including MR tracking systems. Targeted analysis methods included an expert analysis of the usability of the MR Tracker, a case study for the Data and Digital thematic area, and a comparative analysis with the above-mentioned benchmarking study, to compare CGIAR's MR System with selected comparator organizations.

Abridged Findings and Conclusions

The MR system at CGIAR has a structured foundation progressing from inputs to processes, outputs, and ultimately outcomes, yet it exhibits a combination of strengths and challenges in fulfilling its role of fully contributing to organizational effectiveness, learning, and accountability.

The MR template, designed to guide responses to evaluation recommendations, provides a clear structure for assigning timelines, responsibilities, and actionable steps. However, its inconsistent application across evaluations undermines its potential. The lack of coherence in how the template is used has led to incomplete data, with some recommendations entirely omitted. This inconsistency created gaps in tracking and follow-up processes, thereby reducing the system's ability to ensure that recommendations are effectively implemented or translated into actionable outcomes.

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[1] Upon the decision of the CGIAR System Council, it supersedes the 2012 CGIAR Policy for Independent External Evaluation. (CGIAR-IAES 2022a; CGIAR-IAES. 2022b).

Timeframes for developing, approving, and communicating MRs—set at three to six weeks—are generally adequate in stable organizational conditions. However, during periods of transition, such as two rounds of leadership changes and restructuring in CGIAR since 2020, these timeframes have proven insufficient. The evolving roles and responsibilities created uncertainty, making it challenging to identify accountable parties for implementing recommendations. Interviews and document data highlight that such ambiguity often stems from systemic challenges, including overlapping responsibilities and resource constraints. These factors, coupled with competing priorities, led to delays or cancellations of some action plans.

Another critical issue lies in the volume and clarity of recommendations. Many evaluation reports contain a high number of recommendations, some of which are vaguely phrased or presented as broad statements rather than actionable guidance. This lack of specificity hinders the development of concrete MRs and subsequently, makes it challenging to trace the impact of recommendations from independent evaluations and to verify follow-up actions. Moreover, the quality and phrasing of recommendations vary across independent evaluations, further exacerbating inconsistencies.

CGIAR's MR system includes tools such as the [MR Tracker](#), which provides a platform for monitoring the status of MR actions responding to recommendations from independent evaluations. The [MR Tracker](#) categorizes actions as 'completed,' 'on track,' 'not started,' 'delayed,' or 'cancelled.' While this provides a basic level of visibility, it falls short in several areas. The data entered into the Tracker lacks sufficient elaboration, with little evidence or verification to substantiate progress claims. The absence of feedback loops within CGIAR hinders an adequate assessment of how implemented recommendations and MR actions influence decision-making or inform the design of new programs.

The absence of a centralized Knowledge Management (KM) system limits the organization's ability to systematically capture, document, and share insights. This gap leads to the loss of institutional memory, further reducing the long-term impact of independent evaluations. Moreover, MEL practices across centers are inconsistent, with some centers lacking robust systems to support the systematic sharing of lessons. Strengthening the MEL CoP and fostering greater alignment among centers would help address fragmentation and improve the uptake of lessons learned.

Although there are occasional synergies between the Evaluation and Internal Audit functions, these are not systematically institutionalized. Both functions address similar areas, such as program management and financial efficiency, but their respective roles in assessing effectiveness and compliance, in the case of Audit, are not well-integrated. A more formal mechanism to align and cross-reference findings from both functions could enhance organizational learning and risk management.

The misalignment between the timing of evaluations and organizational changes diminishes the relevance of recommendations. For instance, evaluations conducted during transitions can result in recommendations that are either mostly "partially accepted" or "deferred" in the MRs, due to their misalignment with the evolving operational context. Additionally, the sheer volume of recommendations can be overwhelming to some stakeholders, particularly when resources to implement are limited. To address these challenges, participatory approaches to the evaluation process-especially during the drafting and finalization of recommendations-would ensure that recommendations are both feasible and aligned with CGIAR's priorities at the time. Clear criteria for developing recommendations, focusing on their relevance, feasibility, and alignment with organizational capacities, would improve their quality and adoption.

Strengthening accountability mechanisms, improving the robustness of a data system to comprehensively track the implementation of recommendations and MR actions would enhance the system's utility. Furthermore, implementing the planned Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, Impact Assessment, and Foresight (MELIAF) framework across centers would support alignment and foster a more

holistic approach to learning and ensure a consistent documentation, dissemination, and application of evidence-based insights. By learning from peer organizations, CGIAR can adopt best practices such as strategic prioritization of recommendations and participatory approaches when finalizing the recommendations to independent evaluations, and an enhanced collaboration among stakeholders within the MR system would ensure a more coherent and effective response to recommendations. These adjustments would enable CGIAR to strengthen its MR system, fostering greater organizational learning and improving evidence-based decision-making.

Recommendations

Three recommendations aim to address different levels of engagement with the MR System and represent principal steps for change. For each recommendation, suggestions for possible (e.g., non-binding and non-exhaustive) measures are presented, for consideration during the development of the MR for this review. All suggested measures are practical and realistic, with implementation feasible within the next 12 months.

1. The **Evaluation Function** of IAES should adjust the management of independent evaluations, including the development of recommendations and timelines for MR, to fit changing contexts, and to be able to report annually on the uptake of recommendations to support evidence-based planning, programming, and decision-making across CGIAR. IAES, in its advisory capacity, should ensure that independent evaluations are accompanied by clear suggestions on which stakeholders should be involved in the development of the MR and its implementation.
2. **CGIAR** should revisit the positioning of responsible parties tracking the implementation of recommendations to independent evaluations and its MR actions. Under its new structure, CGIAR should consider this function as a joint responsibility of the Chief Scientist's office, specifically the PPU and PCU. PPU should oversee the tracking of MR actions at the portfolio level, while the PCU should manage tracking at the program level. CGIAR should continue to refine its technical modalities to enhance the effective tracking of MR actions, followed by a revision of its guiding MR System documents.
3. **CGIAR** should enhance an organizational culture of learning - where evidence-based planning and programming is applied - by streamlining processes and reducing fragmentation (across centers) to leverage insights from CGIAR's independent evaluations and lessons learned and best practices deriving from other evidence-based exercises within CGIAR.

1 Introduction

Evaluation is considered an important component for learning, for strategic orientations and evidence-based policy and program decision-making and improving development effectiveness. The Paris Declaration (2005) and Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2011) helped concentrate the efforts of institutions on internalizing principles of development effectiveness and brought greater attention to the importance of ownership and mutual accountability. Regular evaluations ensure that multilateral organizations remain accountable to stakeholders, including donor countries, recipient nations, and the public, and that transparent evaluation processes build trust and legitimacy by demonstrating responsible use of resources.[2]

The United Nations Evaluations Group (UNEG), in its Norms and Standards, state that organizations should ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to ensure management responds to evaluation recommendations, and that these mechanisms outline concrete actions to be undertaken in the management response (MR) and in the follow-up to recommendation implementation. In its first assessment of CGIAR in 2019, the Multilateral Organization Assessment Network (MOPAN) identified several weaknesses regarding accountability and follow-up, and uptake of lessons and best practices measures, to which an official MR was issued, as per MOPAN procedures. Building on CGIAR's progress in addressing identified shortcomings, this MR system review seeks to enhance its mechanisms and processes. The insights aim to inform the adjustments to the existing MR System for CGIAR, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for its programming and towards impacts.

This report is grounded in the Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the independent external review of CGIAR's MR System,[3] commissioned by the CGIAR System Council, and executed by the CGIAR Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES).[4] (OECD, 2016). It is anchored in the IAES 2022-24 Workplan (2021; re-confirmed 2024), and was conducted by an external independent review team, including two external consultants and a research analyst consultant engaged by IAES.

This report outlines the scope and focus of the review, providing background on CGIAR's management response (MR) system and processes, along with the review methodology, in Chapter 1 ; it presents 11 findings, each of them corresponding to review questions identified in the ToR in Chapter 2; and in Chapter 3, it proposes three main recommendations that derive logically from the conclusions and findings presented in the same chapter, for improvement of CGIAR's MR System to independent evaluations. Additional sources and references cited in the report are available in the annexes of a separate accompanying document.

1.1 CGIAR's Enabling Environment

Since CGIAR was assessed by MOPAN in 2019, the organization went through various major changes, resulting in a new Portfolio 2025-30 endorsed in May 2024, and two revisions of organizational structure. It was during CGIAR's portfolio of Science Groups (SGs) between 2022-24, that the MR process and products were developed and operationalized.

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Management Response System includes workflows, databases of committed actions, as well as all associated instructions, guidelines, and processes.

[4] Upon the decision of the CGIAR System Council, it supersedes the 2012 CGIAR Policy for Independent External Evaluation. (CGIAR-IAES, 2022a; CGIAR-IAES, 2022b).

CGIAR differs from other types of multilateral organizations usually assessed by MOPAN–it has a unique structure, consisting of independent and autonomous research centers with staff working in more than 70 countries, supported by a System Organization headquartered in Montpellier, France.

CGIAR's mission is to deliver science and innovation that advance the transformation of food, land, and water systems in a climate crisis. As stated in its Research and Innovation Strategy 2030, CGIAR has focused on a continued, critical need to close production gaps in the face of a broader range of globally interconnected climate, environmental, social, and geopolitical pressures. The re-structured portfolio will run for six years from 2025 through 2030, to be implemented in nine CGIAR programs and three accelerators,[5] underpinned by CGIAR's genebank and knowledge assets.

As CGIAR's new governance structure[6] and the new 2025-30 Portfolio play a critical role in creating an enabling environment to implement the organization's vision, it will be crucial for this review to take account of this to best identify and understand mechanisms and structures that help ensure that evaluations are used to contribute to organizational effectiveness, learning, and accountability.

1.2 Overview of CGIAR's Management Response System

The CGIAR Evaluation Policy (2022), Article 6 on Roles and Responsibilities, stipulates that CGIAR management is responsible for providing adequate resources to ensure the proactive consideration of findings and recommendations from evaluations, the preparation, and timely follow-up and implementation of agreed actions. The Policy also references that a MR Tracking System (Article 7.2, page 10) would document MR and follow-up actions to evaluations covered under the scope and applicability of the Policy.[7]

In support of the CGIAR-wide Evaluation Framework and Policy, the guidelines on CGIAR's Management Engagement and Response (MER): Process and Performance Evaluations in CGIAR (pre-read to 19th meeting of System Council), was developed to strengthen use and engagement with evaluations in CGIAR and facilitate formal MRs and use of recommendations. Subsequently, the CGIAR Internal Process Note was developed by PPU for responsible business units and entities, to help ensure that recommendations from independent evaluations are systematically tracked, addressed, and implemented, thus fostering accountability and organizational learning. Aligned with the above, and for the purpose of this review, the MR System encompasses three inter-twined components related to mandates (see Figure 1). Aligned to the components of CGIAR's MR System, its various stages and stakeholders involved are captured in Figure 2 below.

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[5] The nine programs are namely: Breeding for Tomorrow, Sustainable Farming, Sustainable Animal and Aquatic Foods, Multifunctional Landscapes, Better Nutrition, Climate Action, Policy Innovation, Food Frontiers and Security (all Science Programs), as well as Scaling for Impact (Scaling Program). The three accelerators are Gender Equality and Inclusion, Shared Capacity, Digital Transformation.

[6] Main references are: 1) The Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, that was agreed between CGIAR System's funders and 15 centers on 16 June 2016 and with effect from 1 July 2016, as the governing instrument of the CGIAR System Organization. It was last amended with effect from 1 October 2024 as the legal instrument governing the CGIAR System Organization and establishing the CGIAR Integrated Partnership; 2) CGIAR's System Framework, that was approved by the CGIAR System's funders and centers on 17 June 2016 and was last amended with effect from 1 October 2024; and 3) CGIAR's Integration Framework Agreement, version 5, dated 16 December 2022.

[7] At the time of revising the Evaluation Policy, a designated MR tracking system did not exist. The Evaluation Function was engaging with the Internal Audit Function of CGIAR to integrate it within their system.

Figure 1. Components of the MR system
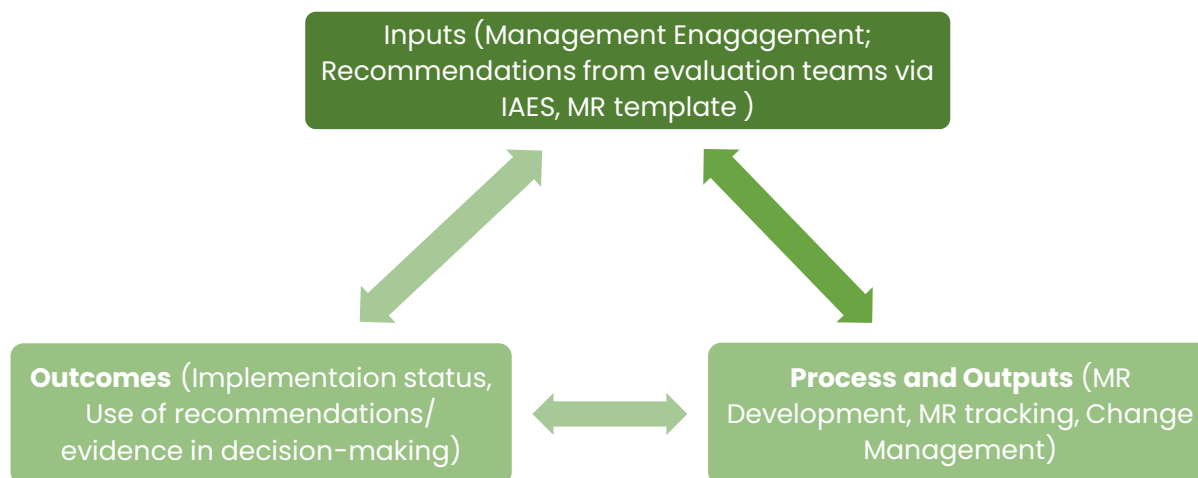
Source: IAES, 2024.

A key input into MR flow, the CGIAR MR Template (see Annex 6) offers a standardized format to respond to the formal recommendations of the evaluation. This current template is an adaptation of the previous version of the CGIAR evaluation office (Independent Evaluation Arrangement), that was in place prior to the 2019 MOPAN assessment.

PPU's Process Note: Developing, tracking, and reporting on management responses to evaluations (Version 1.0) specifies, that the PPU is the System Organization business unit responsible for coordinating CGIAR's MR-related processes. The PPU tracks and reports on MR implementation in January and June of each year. The annual CGIAR Internal Practice Change (Type 3) Report (2022 linked, as an example), a component of the CGIAR Technical Report, includes a section on the progress of implementation of MR actions (PPU, 2024). In Q4 of 2022, PPU established the MR Tracking Tool (hereinafter referred to as MR Tracker) to track the status of implementing MRs to IAES' independent evaluations.

Figure 2. CGIAR's MR development flow
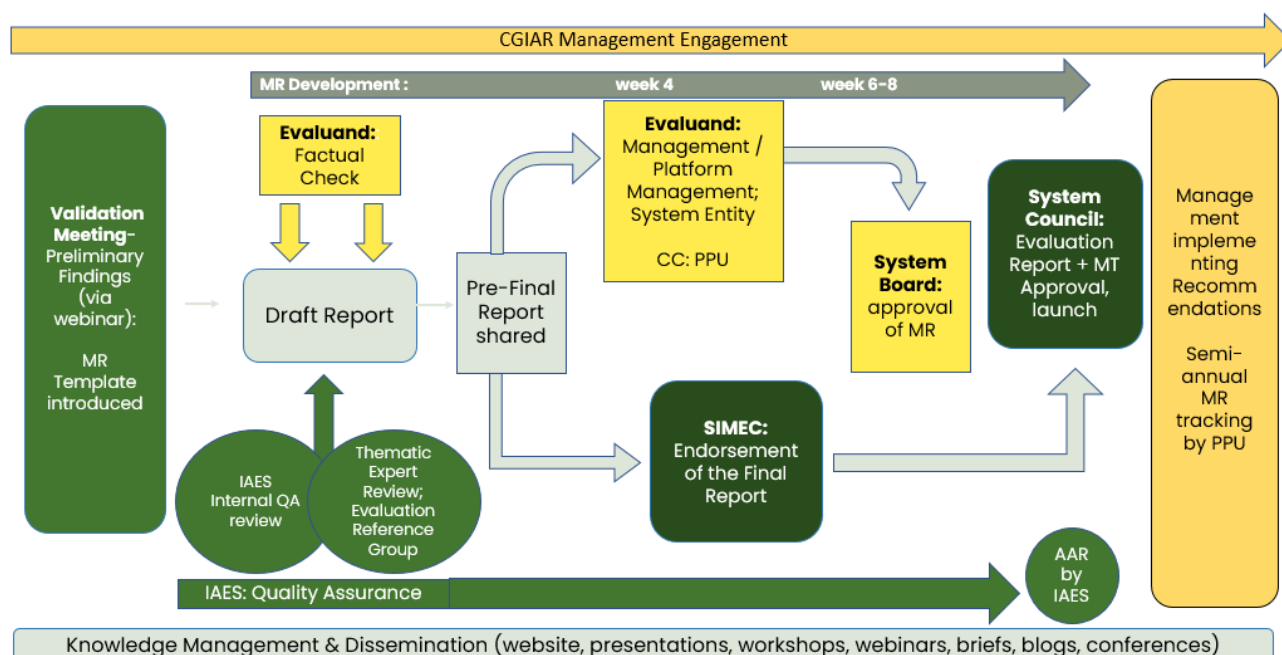
Source: IAES Management Engagement and Response Guideline (2023), mirrored in the sister Process Note, Developing, Tracking and Reporting on Management Responses to Evaluations (CGIAR PPU, 2024b).

As of December 2024, the MR Tracker covers seven evaluations and reviews: 1) 2021 Synthesis; 2) four Platform Evaluations; 3) 2023 Advisory Study on the Performance and Results Management System (PRMS); and 4) Evaluability Assessment Review of Four Regional Integrated Initiatives. For these evaluative activities, Figure 3 below presents the status of 186 MR actions, categorized into five groups: 1) on track; 2) completed; 3) not started; 4) delayed; and 5) cancelled; and provides a breakdown of these actions, showing the distribution of their current progress.

Figure 3. Status breakdown of 186 Management Response actions–summary report
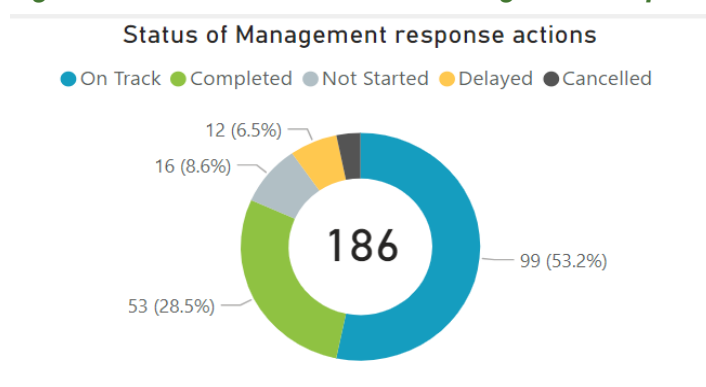
Source: Evaluation & Management Response Actions Tracker, accessed 15 December 2024.

1.3   Purpose, Objectives, Scope and Methodology

In light of CGIAR's ongoing internal changes, the upcoming CGIAR 2025-30 Portfolio, and in preparation for a potential second MOPAN assessment (aligned to MOPAN cycle[8]), a review of the MR System to independent evaluations is both timely and relevant. The **purpose** of this review is to support sustained improvements to CGIAR's MR System. Insights gained are intended to inform the continued development of a more effective MR System for CGIAR.

To balance accountability (e.g., completing agreed MR actions) and learning (e.g., improving all components of the MR System), the review focused on the following **specific objectives:**

1. Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the MR System;[9]
2. Facilitate the implementation of evaluation recommendations through MR System processes; and
3. Support evidence-based planning, programming, and decision-making across CGIAR, underpinned by MR System processes.

The review **scope** covers all seven independent evaluations and reviews (2021 through 2024) within CGIAR's MR Tracker. These seven evaluations include one Synthesis, one Evaluability Assessment Synthesis, one Advisory Review, and four performance evaluations (see Annex 4 for a full list of evaluation reports). Additionally, three SGs evaluations (completed in 2024) were added to the scope.[10] The corresponding actions are not yet reflected in the MR Tracker, as the MR development for these evaluations is still ongoing.. Including these evaluations in scope provided the review with the opportunity to learn from the MR process in real time and aimed to inform strategic learning. The three SG evaluations are reflected in the list of evaluations in Annex 4.

IAES, per its mandate, and as outlined in the IAES's ToR, is responsible for supporting implementation of CGIAR's Multi-Year Evaluation Plan in a manner that meets the CGIAR System's need for rigorous, high-quality independent evaluations to inform decision making across the System. Major functional responsibilities in that regard include "as relevant to evaluation findings and recommendations, and System Council, System Board and/or center or project and platform actions agreed thereon, coordinating with the business unit responsible for monitoring implementation of agreed actions to facilitate the provision of an annual statement to the System Council's Assurance and Oversight Committee (AOC) of the status of implementation of evaluation recommendations". The **key users** of the review results are all stakeholders that are directly involved in CGIAR's MR System. See a full list of stakeholders in Annex 5.

As indicated in the ToR, the analytical framework applied for this review is guided by MOPAN elements under the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) 8 within the MOPAN methodology 3.1 (2020), as well as elements from UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2017).[11] As such, this report is structured around these main

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[8] MOPAN's Steering Committee selects multilateral organizations for assessment based on the collective preferences of members. The timing for each assessment is also determined by MOPAN's Steering Committee and seeks to balance timing around key organizational cycles (such as replenishments or strategic cycles) and the need for timely information. See Frequently Asked Questions about MOPAN here:
https://www.mopanonline.org/home/frequentlyaskedquestions/#:~:text=11.,the%20need%20for%20timely%20information.

[9] See definitions for effectiveness and efficiency in the CGIAR Evaluation Policy here:
https://cgspace.cgiar.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/46be39f4-f827-4a0f-9575-0af56971294c/content.

[10] Furthermore, assessment of implementation of Synthesis 2021 recommendations for three Action Areas took place as part of SG evaluations.

[11] Specific references will be Standard 1.4 MR and follow up, and Standard 4.10 Recommendations.

questions (see Review Matrix in Annex 7), and the recommendations at the end of this report correspond with these questions, and subsequently with the elements of MOPAN's KPI 8. Aligned with the ToR, the four main review questions are:

1. How effectively and efficiently is the MR System contributing to organizational effectiveness, learning, and accountability?
2. To what extent does the MR System ensure responses and follow-up to, and use of, evaluation recommendations?
3. To what extent are other processes and mechanisms in place to ensure the uptake of lessons learned and best practices from evaluations?
4. What adjustments in the independent evaluative activities would improve CGIAR's effectiveness to inform evidence-based planning and decision-making based on best practices?[12]

Aligned to the review ToRs, its design and implementation are guided by the CGIAR Evaluation Framework and Policy (2022). The review was conducted in an iterative manner, allowing for refinement of the data collection methods as the review progressed. It engaged with a variety of stakeholders to identify critical issues and good practices. A stakeholder analysis is presented in Annex 5. The list of the 49 key informants that were consulted for this review can be found in Annex 8.

The evaluation process was gender sensitive and balanced, ensuring the representation of women during interviews and focus group discussions. Details of approach and methodology are provided in Annex 1.

A participatory approach was applied for the development of the recommendations, deriving from findings and conclusions from this review. Recommendations were drafted tentatively and presented for discussion with key internal stakeholders at a recommendation refinement meeting on 17 December 2024 in Montpellier, France. The recommendations were finalized after collective reflection at that meeting.

1.4 Limitations

There are four key limitations to this review:

1. Limited access to key stakeholders for interviews due to their busy schedules or other commitments, especially in Q4 of 2024 due to Portfolio 2025-30 revision and launch. Staff turnover during restructuring and the inability to reach former staff further confounded access.
2. Available data regarding implementation status of recommendations and MR actions is not sufficiently elaborated, which hindered a comprehensive analysis of the MR System's effectiveness and efficiency. Consequently, it was impossible to apply the tailored instrument (developed at inception phase; see Annex 1) to assess the implementation status of recommendations. See also Finding 4.
3. Some relevant information of various types of CGIAR current and upcoming programs and arrangements related to the MR System review, and including relevant MR System stakeholders, were shared very late in the data collection process, which resulted in a prolonged data collection phase, that hampered a detailed assessment and led to only high-level assessment of respective initiatives.

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[12] It should be noted that the IAES Director sought this information from this review as per the original ToR Review, putting IAES in the unusual position of object of evaluation.

4. The increased number of interviews from approximately 25 planned to a total of 49 resulted in an extended data collection phase and led to limited time for analysis and report writing. The reason for this increased number (doubled in size), was due to new information about current and upcoming programs and arrangements during data collection, which required additional interviews to ensure that a wide range of perspectives was captured and could confirm or challenge preliminary findings.

2 Findings

Findings are presented in this section by responding to each of the four main review questions and the respective sub-questions. The main questions responded to are presented at the start of each sub-section.

2.1 Effectiveness and Efficiency of the MR System

Review question 1: How effectively and efficiently is the MR System contributing to organizational effectiveness, learning, and accountability?

Finding 1. *[responding to SQ 1.1, SQ 1.3, SQ 1.5, SQ 1.8]* **The MR template is perceived efficient from its simple structure. However, its inconsistent and incoherent application leads to an inaccurate database that does not allow to adequately track and follow-up on recommendations from independent evaluations.**

The CGIAR MR Template (see Annex 6) provides structured guidance for addressing recommendations from evaluations. It facilitates the MR by standardizing key elements such as action plans, timeframes, and responsible parties, which are fundamental for clarity and follow-up, while ensuring that a consistent format simplifies monitoring and follow-up efforts.

Interview data indicates that the structured format helps in aligning specific recommendations with timelines and responsibilities, and that the template facilitates a process for reflection (see also Finding 2 and Finding 11), and that it has been proven to be helpful in organizing thoughts and responses into actionable steps.

However, this structure of the MR template was not followed and applied in a consistent and coherent manner for the MRs assessed for this review (seven independent evaluations from 2021-24). The template was either used differently for each of the seven evaluations or it is incomplete. For instance, text fields such as the "overall response to the evaluation" or the "division affiliation and person(s)-in-charge for follow-up to MR" are responded to in an incoherent manner, or they remain empty, as in the case of the Management Response to the GENDER Platform Evaluation (2023). It is also the case that recommendations from evaluation reports are not reflected at all in the MR, which is particularly the case for the Management Response to the Synthesis of the Evaluability Assessments Review of Four Regional Integrated Initiatives (2024). Here, only nine of the fifteen recommendations from the Synthesis: Evaluability Assessment of Four Regional Integrated Initiatives (2024) are reflected in the MR. Within the section 'overall response to the evaluation', the response provides reasoning and justifies that "Management considers that the nine long-term recommendations (#s 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, and 15) are within the remit of CGIAR management to act upon and form the basis of this response. Management considers that recommendations grouped in the Evaluability Assessment as "For the near-term in preparing for evaluation" (#s 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 12, 16, 17, and 18) are aimed at the practice of an evaluation team and are therefore not appropriate for management to respond to." Since these ten 'near-term' recommendations are not reflected in the MR, not even indicated as 'not

accepted'[13] or any other justification provided, they vanished from the MR System and are not able to track back and subsequently lose their visibility.

Although PPU's Process Note (2024) indicates that the "Executive Managing Director reviews, seeks clarification and approves MR" within one week after submission to the Executive Managing Director (EMD) office, the Process Note does not clearly reflect what type of review is in place to validate and help assuring that all recommendations are reflected in the MR and are adequately responded to, before approval.

Finding 2. *[responding to SQ 1.2]* **While the timeframe for developing, approving and communicating MRs to governance bodies is deemed sufficient, moving parts within the organization, such as leadership changes and restructuring, complicated the application of the template and implementation of recommendations.**

The provided timeframe of three to six weeks for developing, approving and communicating MRs to governance bodies, as it is outlined in the PPU's Process Note (2024), is generally deemed sufficient under stable conditions. Interview data reveals that teams with well-defined roles and resources can typically meet the deadlines effectively. However, during periods of significant structural or portfolio changes (twice between 2021 and 2024), such as the current transition to the new 2025-30 Portfolio, the timeline for MR preparation became a constraint. In such cases, the roles, responsibilities, and operational structures are often in flux, creating ambiguity about who is accountable for implementing recommendations. Additionally, many stakeholders involved in the MR process juggle multiple responsibilities. These multiples roles in management and leadership often led to difficulties in dedicating adequate time to thoughtfully develop and implement responses within the given deadlines.

Timing mismatches between evaluations and organizational changes also led to challenges in implementing recommendations. Recommendations tailored to a previous structure or context risk losing relevance if organizational priorities shift significantly. This was particularly the case in the three SG Evaluations. These evaluations, as per their ToRs-endorsed by the Strategic Impact, Monitoring, and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC)-aimed to provide real-time feedback and recommendations towards institutional learning and adaptation of the CGIAR 25 Portfolio, as well as to facilitate accountability for, and learning from, the initial two years of 2030 Portfolio implementation, while aiding SIMEC and IAES to identify evaluative needs for the 2025-27 Multi-Year Evaluation Plan. However, interview data indicates perceived unnecessary burden and required contribution at an unstable time for respective departments and job profiles. Stakeholders suggested that extending deadlines for formulating MRs during periods of major transitions could provide the clarity and stability needed to formulate more impactful responses, and to ensure that recommendations are not just addressed superficially but are thoughtfully adapted to the evolving organizational context. See also Finding 3 and Finding 11.

Finding 3. *[responding to SQ 1.3, SQ 1.5, SQ 1.8]* **While the MR template promotes specificity, some MR actions remain vague due to the lack of harmonization in phrasing the recommendations in the evaluation reports, the high volume of recommendations, and the uncertainty about future operational contexts, which subsequently hinders the traceability of actions and recommendations.**

The structured MR template ensures that actions can be assigned with specific timelines, responsible parties, and objectives, and it therefore provides a systematic approach to translating recommendations into actionable steps. However, organizational changes, such as the shift from SGs to a new portfolio often blur lines of responsibility, making it harder to assign clear accountability for actions. Document data states that the development of the MRs to the three SG evaluations "presented challenges in the development of

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[13] Other options to indicate in the template are 'partially accepted' and 'fully accepted'.

appropriate Management Responses", which was confirmed by interview data, that implies challenges in determining who will take ownership of certain actions post-restructuring.

Another hindrance for vague actions in the MR template is the lack of harmonization in phrasing the recommendations in the evaluation reports. While the Evaluation Function guides external evaluation teams to present main recommendations, that are followed by a set of sub-recommendations which are supposed to give practical instructions, there is a notable difference throughout the seven independent evaluations, in how clearly and precisely recommendations are written, which results in a certain level of vagueness in action plans. Such an example is the third main recommendation in the Evaluation of CGIAR Excellence in Breeding Platform (2022), that is written as follows:

> "Successful project planning and management depends on clarity of goals and purpose, a comprehensive results framework based on a theory of change, and integrated MEL mechanisms."

While this recommendation is followed by a set of sub-recommendations, that are all marked as 'completed' in the MR Tracker, the main recommendation–though listed as a main recommendation in the evaluation report- is neither reflected in the MR Tracker, nor is it directly responded to in the MR to the evaluation.

These types of recommendations, that are broadly framed and read more like a statement than a recommendation that conveys specific actions, led to the application becoming diluted, making the recommendations difficult or impossible to track. In some cases, actions linked to recommendations are also generalized or not sufficiently detailed, affecting their traceability and making it challenging to verify progress objectively. Consequently, the available MR Tracker cannot take the full benefits of well-structured and clear information, which would allow much-needed continuity from a main recommendation, with its sub-recommendations, to responses and associated actions to implement.

As outlined in its Process Note (2024), PPU in Q4 2024, within its responsibility for coordinating CGIAR's development of MRs, as well as tracking and reporting on its implementation in the annual CGIAR Portfolio Performance Management and Project Coordination Practice Change (Type 3) Report (a component of the CGIAR Technical Report), initiated an internal exercise to improve areas for verifiability and accountability. This exercise includes the development of a Review Process for Independent Evaluation Recommendations and Sub-Recommendations and Management Response Actions, with the aim to:

- Establish clear criteria and implement a formal review process to review independent evaluation recommendations and sub-recommendations and assess the quality of MR actions during their development.

- Enable prioritization across the large number of independent evaluation recommendations and sub-recommendations and MR actions through this review process.

- As CGIAR transitions to a new operational structure in 2025, implement a review process to assess which current independent evaluation recommendations and sub-recommendations and MR actions are relevant moving forward.[14]

Within this process, PPU plans to assess the strategic value and feasibility of the remaining (not yet completed) recommendations to increase ownership and accountability, and to enhance the use of SMART criteria[15] to strengthen the implementation of agreed recommendations and ensure clear, accountable progress (see also Finding 7). Interview data suggests though, that, while this exercise is still at an early stage,

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[14] Review Process for Evaluation Recommendations and MRAs. Shared by PPU on 26 November 2024.

[15] SMART, as in specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time bound.

it is not initiated in a collaborative manner that involves all main stakeholders of the MR System, including the Evaluation Function at IAES, which is responsible for developing the recommendations, deriving from findings and conclusions in independent evaluations. The review notes that PPU plans to engage IAES when appropriate.

Finding 4. *[responding to SQ 1.4]* **The available data regarding implementation status of recommendations and MR actions is not sufficiently elaborated (as of December 2024) to assess if specific needs from key stakeholders are met.**

The presence of some missing information on the implementation status of recommendations and MR actions, diminishes the utility of the MR Tracker, in terms of tracking and linking recommendations, responses and actions.

The presentation of data in the MR Tracker appears to be informative for different stakeholders, with the different filtering and categories (primary category, MOPAN) providing an overview via a pie chart and bar charts of the evaluations. While primary categories[16] have a causal link to CGIAR's strategic priorities, it is not fully clear which user's need the MOPAN category meets, or which strategic organizational direction it aims to inform. See Figure 4 and Figure 5:

Figure 4. Primary categories for the seven evaluations in the MR Tracker
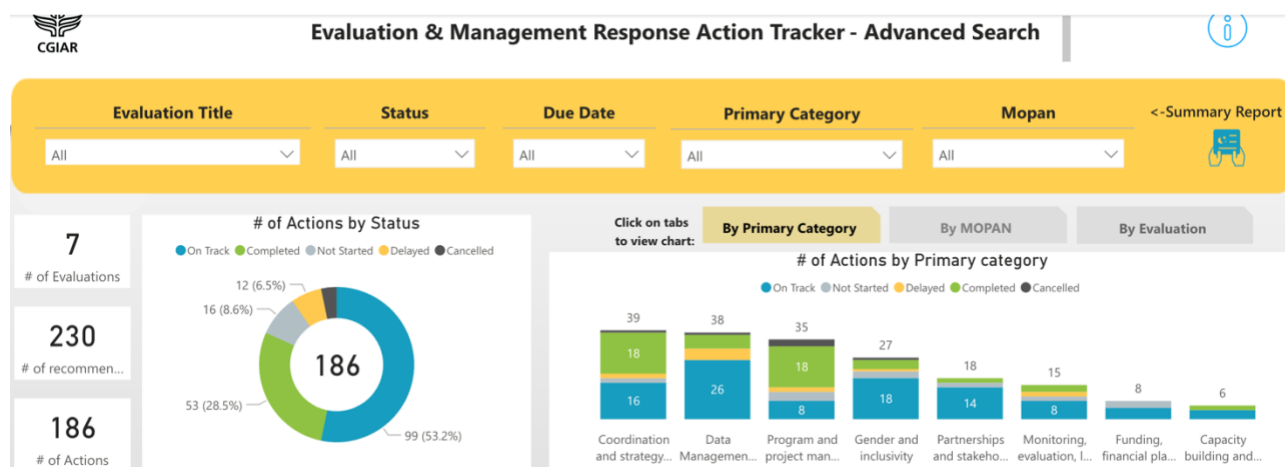
Source: Evaluation & Management Response Actions Tracker, accessed 15 December 2024.

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[16] Primary categories are: data management and digital solutions/digital transformation, partnerships and stakeholder engagement, capacity building and strengthening, program and project management, coordination and strategy development across CGIAR, MELIA, gender and inclusivity, funding, financial, planning and resource allocation.

Figure 5. Reflecting MOPAN category for the seven evaluations in the MR Tracker
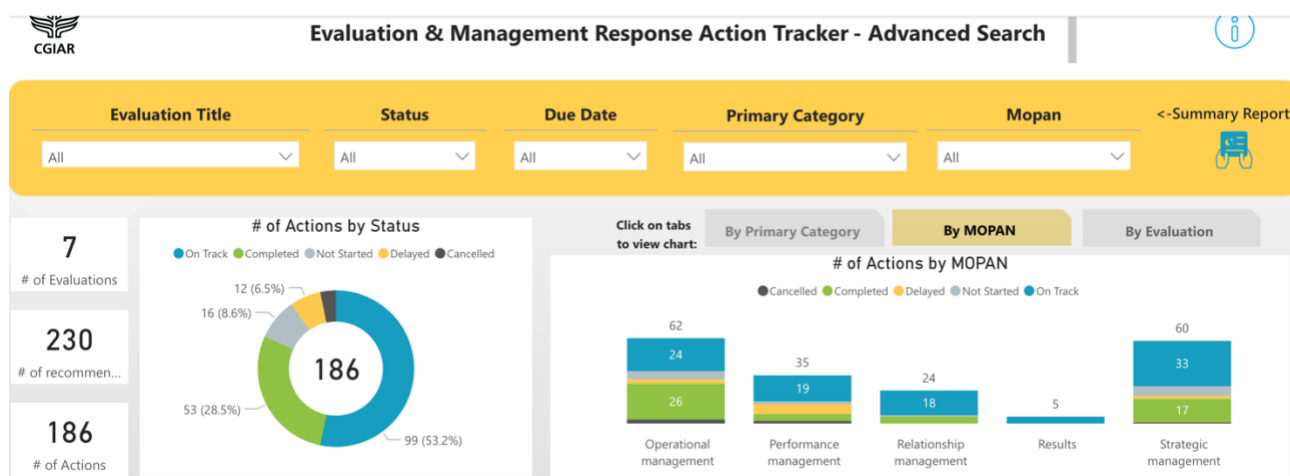
Source: Evaluation & Management Response Actions Tracker, accessed 15 December 2024.

Within its efforts to improve the monitoring and tracking, PPU, in Q4 2024, initiated another internal exercise in partnership with the department of Digital Solutions for Integrated Management. Following an agile development by anticipating the needs of the main stakeholders and users, such as respective evaluands or IAES' Evaluation Function, the exercise aims to build a new data entry tool, that will replace the currently used Excel file. This new data source could then feed the MR Tracker, which is supposed to remain to display the dashboard to the public. The newly built data entry tool aims to be more efficient and effective by simplifying collecting and entering the data which happens now only through a labor intensive and time-consuming process, by twice a year, manually copying and pasting collected data into an Excel file, followed by quality assuring this data before uploading it to the MR Tracker. Updates on the progress of each of the actions from the MR are requested by PPU in January and June of each year from those assigned to lead on MR actions. Progress updates from January contribute to the annual Type 3 report, while those from June are being used for internal progress tracking and for presentation in a report to management.

Finding 5. *[responding to SQ 1.6, SQ 1.7, SQ 1.8]* **While some action plans were implemented as planned, others remain unaddressed or were cancelled due to contextual challenges, unavailable resources, organizational priorities, and lack of leadership clarity.**

There is an evident impact of conflicting organizational priorities to the implementation of recommendations and actions. Recommendations linked to structure face incomplete implementation. This was especially noticeable during Q1 2024, where six recommendations were cancelled.[17]

As of 15 December 2024, out of 186 MR actions reflected in the MR Tracker, more than half (53.2%; 99) of MR actions are on track, 28.5% (53) were completed, 8.6% (16) have not yet been started, 6.5% (12) are delayed, and 3.2% (6) were cancelled (see Figure 3). A document review reveals that the justifications for cancelling the six actions were resource availability and organizational priorities (3), leadership/mandate clarity (1), and contextual challenges (2). All three recommendations, that were cancelled because of resource

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[17] Request for approval to cancel a MR action CONSOLIDATED [93]. Shared by PPU on 19 November 2024.

availability and organizational priorities are from the Study of the Performance Results Management System (PRMS) Project Management Approaches and Fit-for-Purpose Information Products.

Resource constraints-limited financial and human resources-were a significant barrier to implementing agreed recommendations. For example, action plans requiring MELIA expertise or dedicated program managers are delayed due to resource shortages. Whereas programs with already embedded MELIA experts and robust monitoring frameworks see higher implementation rates, as these functions ensure alignment and consistency in tracking progress. Accepted and partially accepted recommendations were later cancelled because financial resources were limited or not approved, due to prioritizing other activities and funds. This was particularly the case for the recommendation "Clarify which CGIAR dashboards are considered PRMS elements with respective products, their management, and their quality assurance (QA) mechanisms concerning the QA of the PRMS" from the PRMS Study.

Another hindrance to implementation is the involvement of multiple stakeholders or unclear roles where coordination challenges arose and led to delays or non-implementation. Interview data suggests difficulties in aligning priorities across departments or regions.

2.2 Follow-up and Use of Evaluation Recommendations

Review question 2: To what extent does the MR System ensure responses and follow-up to, and use of, evaluation recommendations?

Finding 6. *[responding to SQ 2.1, 2.5]* **The MR System has mechanisms in place to identify and track issues such as lack of accountability measures or resource alignment but lacks robust enforcement measures to address inaction.**

The MR System is moderately effective in identifying inaction through the MR Tracker, but it lacks strong enforcement mechanisms to address these issues, such as strengthened accountability measures, improved resource alignment, and escalatory processes, to better ensure consistent implementation of evaluation recommendations.

While the MR template helps management and governance entities in holding specific parties accountable for each action indicated in the template, and while it creates an initial framework for addressing inaction, the template was not applied in a consistent and coherent manner by the MRs assessed for this review (see also Finding 1). The MR Tracker then tracks the status of recommendations and actions, categorizing them as 'on track', 'completed', 'not started', 'delayed', or 'cancelled', which allows stakeholders to identify inaction or delays promptly. The various statuses for each recommendation are generated from data that is collected by PPU via periodic progress reviews from responsible stakeholders as identified in the MR template (see also Finding 5). These periodic progress reviews also provide opportunities to flag inaction and discuss corrective actions. For instance, Annex 1 of PPU's Process Note lists requested information to be provided by lead contributors to MR actions, which includes the request for providing justification for actions that are 'not started' or 'delayed', and the possibility to 'cancel' an action. For the latter, as per the Process Note, a formal request must be presented in writing to the EMD for approval via a cancellation request form that is provided in Annex 3 in the Process Note. Cancelled actions are also reported in the annual Type 3 Report.

Beyond tracking and reporting, the system lacks robust enforcement measures. It was not clearly identified during this review, which measures are in place for management and governance to enforce corrective actions effectively, or how the outcome of the QA process that is in place, is being considered, and if there is any type of follow-up on inaction. Document data as well as interview data suggests that instances of inaction stem from resource and capacity constraints, rather than intentional neglect. Ambiguities in

accountability also weaken the system's ability to enforce compliance effectively. The latter is particularly the case in times of organizational transitions or when overlapping responsibilities obscure. Interview data reveals that some recommendations receive limited attention after initial tracking because of the absence of leadership or clear ownership.

However, it is indicated in Annex 2 of PPU's Process Note, that the recommendation compliance period runs for 12 months from the date that the MR is developed, and that implementation of the agreed actions must be feasible within this timeframe. As of December 2024, the MR Tracker reflects 230 recommendations and 186 actions for seven evaluations from 2021-24, of which 16 recommendations, that were initiated in 2023 or in the Q1 of 2024, have not yet been started, and 12 recommendations, that were initiated between 2021 and the Q1 of 2023, are marked as 'delayed'. The Q4 2024 initiated internal 2024 CGIAR PPU Process Note for Independent Evaluation Recommendations and Sub-Recommendations and Management Response Actions seems to help address this issue by reviewing and prioritizing recommendations and sub-recommendations in the MR Tracker. The intention is to then, by reducing the number of actions, be able to assess which current recommendations and MR actions are relevant with moving forward to the new operational structure in 2025 (CGIAR PPU, 2024b). The approach for this review emphasizes two dimensions ('worth doing' and 'doable'), that are aligned with ISDC's Quality of Research for Development (QOR4D) Framework—focusing on relevance, scientific credibility, legitimacy, and effectiveness-and providing a structured basis for prioritizing actionable and impactful recommendations (CGIAR PPU, 2024b). Interview data suggest however, while this process is still at an early stage, expertise from the main stakeholders, ISDC or the Evaluation Function was not consulted to ensure a transparent process.

Finding 7. *[responding to SQ 2.2]* **The MR Tracker provides the basis of reporting the current state of implementation progress, but on a very basic level with lack of accuracy and faces challenges in operational adaptability and ensuring continuity in a dynamic environment.**

While the MR Tracker provides a foundational structure for monitoring recommendation implementation, it faces challenges in operational adaptability and ensuring continuity in an organizational governance structure that went through various changes over the last years, which led to limited bandwidth and overlapping responsibilities among staff and hindered the implementation and a comprehensive follow-through on recommendations. See Finding 6 on reasons for cancellation.

The public view of the MR Tracker provides the basis of reporting the current state of implementation progress, but on a very basic level with lack of accuracy for several reasons: 1) Missing actions (17 missing actions listed even with 'fully accepted' as a response); 2) Progress on action declared 'on track' but not sufficiently expressed, for most without linked evidence; 3) Lack of information on verification, i.e., QA of the progress itself; and 4) Lack of sufficient matching between the response and the recommendation, in some cases. The information to support the status of an action is particularly important for actions with a relatively long timeframe; this is currently challenging with no percentage of achievement and no tracking on the progress (successive documents bringing evidence of progress). PPU's internal facing tracking tool, which is based on the same Excel file as the MR Tracker, provides a more focused reporting on the timing and deadlines of actions. However, the dataset here is also incomplete.

In terms of monitoring the progress, the status indicator ('cancelled', 'completed', 'delayed', 'not started', 'on track') is not sufficient on its own. No indication for percentage of achievement or evidence of progress associated is present. Neither of the tools express the progress towards completion.

Detailed information and a list of evidence is available in Annexes 2 and 3, which include executive summaries of an expert analysis performed on the MR Tracker. This analysis evaluated the usability of the

Tracker beyond its primary focus on managing responses. The findings are further complemented by a case study for the thematic area 'Data and Digital'.

Finding 8. *[responding to SQ 2.3, SQ 2.4, 2.5, 3.2, 3.6]* **Reporting on MRs to independent evaluations is limited to reporting on its implementation status only. The absence of feedback loops and insufficiently elaborated dataset led to limited evidence as to how implementation of recommendations informed decision-making or the design of new programs.**

The progress reporting on MRs is currently limited to reporting on the implementation status only, which is mainly because organizational systems and channels are not in place to adequately track and assess how recommendations from independent evaluations inform decision-making or the design of new programs.

As outlined in PPU's Process Note, and within its responsibility for coordinating CGIAR's development of MRs, as well as tracking and reporting on their implementation, PPU reports annually on the implementation status (completed, on track, delayed, not started, cancelled) in a dedicated section in CGIAR's Portfolio Practice Change (Type 3) Report. The Process Note also indicates that this section on implementation status aims to include links to evidence, such as evidence that actions have been taken. The document review reveals that this is not present, suggesting lack of QA on this data (documented evidence), see also section Findings 4, 7). Subsequently, it is not possible to comprehensively assess how recommendations informed decision-making. Additionally, although CGIAR's evaluation practices account for its integrated partnership structure by emphasizing collaboration and localized accountability, the timing of evaluations and reporting does not always align with decision-making cycles, leading to missed opportunities for impactful adjustments.

Only a few examples were identified that demonstrate how strategic adjustments were informed by evaluation recommendations and that led to tangible improvements in portfolio implementation. Such examples are recommendations from the 2021 Big Data Platform Evaluation that have been taken onboard within the Digital Transformation Accelerator proposal (2025-27 Portfolio) with key aspects transparent in the four areas of work , and which is evident through a statement expressed in the document: "Multiple evaluations and syntheses over past CGIAR Portfolios offer lessons on the applications, potential, and shortcomings of digital and data strategies…"

However, this evidence appears sporadically. There is no evidence for a mechanism in place for systematically collecting and analyzing feedback on the utility and impact of recommendations.

2.3 Processes and Mechanisms to Ensure Uptake of Lessons Learned

Review question 3: To what extent are other processes and mechanisms in place to ensure the uptake of lessons learned and best practices from evaluations?

Finding 9. *[responding to SQ 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.6, 3.7]* **Beyond the Evaluation & MR Tracker, IAES employs mechanisms to capture, document, and disseminate lessons learned from evaluations. However, the absence of centralized knowledge management hampers systematic documentation and consistent uptake across the organization, leading to incomplete assessments of evaluations' influence.**

Beyond the MR Tracker, CGIAR employs several processes to capture and disseminate lessons learned from evaluations. However, the effectiveness of these mechanisms is limited by the lack of semantic interoperability in Knowledge Management (KM), which is essential for ensuring consistent uptake and application of evaluative insights across the organization.

The Evaluation Function at IAES plays a central role in coordinating evaluations and ensuring that lessons learned are systematically captured and shared. The CGIAR Evaluation Framework and Policy, both approved in 2022, set the approach to evaluations within the organization. They emphasize the importance of KM and learning from evaluations, mandating that evaluation KM products be timely, differentiated, and tailored to meet the needs of targeted audiences. By commissioning independent evaluations and synthesizing their findings, the Evaluation Function conducts comprehensive syntheses of evaluative evidence to distil lessons learned across its research programs. For instance, the 2021 Synthesis of Learning from a Decade of CGIAR Research Programs aggregated findings from several evaluations conducted between 2011 and 2019. This synthesis provided insights into the quality of science, achievement of development outcomes, and management practices, offering recommendations to guide future research directions, operations and partnership decisions (see Annex 9). However, the absence of a centralized KM system means that insights and lessons from evaluations are not always systematically captured, shared, or revisited.

Interview data proposed CGIAR's annual Science Week[18] to be a good opportunity for sharing organizational learning, including learnings from IAES (ISDC, SPIA and the Evaluation Function). Another missed opportunity for a systematic function to channel learning was reported to be the underutilization of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Community of Practice (MEL CoP). The MEL CoP email listserv has been the only active platform, with initial inputs provided exclusively by the IAES Evaluation Function to initiate discussions. Furthermore, not all CGIAR centers have their own MELIA system in place, such as the MEL System of International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), which was identified as a best practice by key stakeholders. Interview data further suggests that strengthening the MEL CoP would also support connecting the centers better, elude fragmentation and help sharing best practices across the system.

CGIAR's Evaluation Policy states that "CGIAR follows a holistic and consistent approach to MEL with the evaluation standards and principles set out in the Evaluation Framework of CGIAR", and that "Instrumental MEL-related services are provided by professionals in CGIAR group operational units, which are responsible for project coordination, and portfolio performance reporting" (CGIAR IAES, 2022b, p.9). Under the current organizational structure (as of December 2024), these two units are the PCU and the PPU.

Interview data suggests that plans are underway that could reinforce such a holistic and consistent approach to MEL and support institutional strengthening. The Gates Foundation is organizing a meeting in mid-January 2025 in Washington D.C., to discuss with invited CGIAR units, a proposed grant for a possible Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, Impact Assessment, and Foresight (MELIAF) framework. Depending on this meeting's outcomes, the implementation of the framework could start in 2025 and support monitoring of the new 2025–30 Portfolio.

Finding 10. *[responding to SQ 3.4, 3.5]* **While CGIAR's MR System and assurance mechanisms such as Internal Audit operate with complementary objectives, the absence of coherence and alignment hinders collectively driving organizational learning and effectiveness.**

Engagement between the MR System for independent evaluations and internal Audit is not systematically institutionalized. Evaluation emphasizes effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance and learning, while Internal Audit focuses on efficiency, compliance and risk management. These roles are distinct but

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[18] CGIAR's first Science Week was planned to take place in July 2024 in Nairobi but was cancelled due to civil unrest in the country. CGIAR's inaugural Science Week is now planned to take place in April 2025 in Nairobi: https://www.icarda.org/media/events/cgiar-science-week-2025.

complementary, and they often address similar issues, such as program management, governance and financial efficiency.

While there is no formal mechanism to integrate findings or recommendations, individual overlaps can occur. Since 2022, under the assurance umbrella of the Evaluation Framework, targeted efforts were made to establish regular and systematic engagements between the Evaluation Function and Internal Audit. For instance, in 2022, CGIAR's Internal Audit Function and Evaluation Function, jointly conducted an advisory study on the PRMS, aiming to provide harmonized advice and recommendations for re-designing and implementing CGIAR's PRMS. Interview data discloses that Internal Audit occasionally considers evaluative evidence when it overlaps with risk assessments or operational audits, enhancing the depth of reviews, or Audit teams occasionally use evaluation recommendations as a reference to design audit scopes, particularly in areas of strategic or operational change. In 2023, the IAES Evaluation Function agreed with Internal Audit to integrate into the survey design a set of questions to address the efficiency evaluation criterion-for example the question on how Initiative leads applied budget cut across work packages. This survey was also used to complement the SG evaluations conducted by IAES in 2023/2024. The final survey report from the SG evaluations was made available and integrated the Internal Audit survey.

Interview data suggests that building on their already regular exchanges, there would be appetite from both parties (Internal Audit and the Evaluation Function), to share KM and Communication systems that enable cross-referencing between evaluation recommendations and audit findings, fostering alignment in some cases.

2.4 Adjustments in Independent Evaluative Activities

Review question 4: What adjustments in the independent evaluative activities would improve CGIAR's effectiveness to inform evidence-based planning and decision-making based on best practices?

Finding 11. *[responding to SQ 4.1, 4.2]* **While independent evaluations are seen as valuable tools for organizational learning and improvement, their impact is often diluted by timing issues, resource constraints, and a lack of follow-up mechanisms. Addressing these challenges through strategic prioritization, participatory processes, and an improved centralized knowledge management can significantly enhance the utility of evaluative evidence to inform decision-making within CGIAR.**

While interview data indicates appreciation for the value of independent evaluations, in alignment with document data, it raises the following two key issues for improvement: 1) timing of evaluations and contextual misalignment; and 2) volume of recommendations.

2.4.1   Timing of Evaluations and Contextual Misalignment

The three SG evaluations were referenced frequently in interviews as an example for timing mismatches between evaluations and organizational changes, which is supported by documentation, indicating that the MRs to the three SG evaluations "presented challenges in the development of appropriate MRs" (CGIAR, 2024). See also Finding 3. These evaluations, as per the ToRs, were endorsed by SIMEC and the Evaluation Function's workplan, and are approved by the System Council. Despite these evaluations aiming to provide real-time feedback and recommendations towards institutional learning and adaptation of the CGIAR 25 Portfolio, recommendations were tailored to a previous structure or context (to the current portfolio that ends in December 2024), and therefore risk losing their relevance. This is reflected in the respective MRs to each SG evaluation, as of the 88 recommendations and sub-recommendations from the three

evaluations, the majority (N-63) were only 'partially accepted', and 20 were 'fully accepted'. While no recommendations were 'not accepted', a new category of response, 'deferred', was used for a small number (N-5) of MRs, of which all apply to the MR for the SG evaluation on System Transformation. Agenda Item 11, prepared for reporting at the first IPB Meeting on 18-20 October 2024 in Washington D.C., stated that the high proportion of 'partially accepted' responses, and the use of the new 'deferred' category, is due to the need for input from specific functions such as the Chief Scientist, and the need for CGIAR's new operational structure and management arrangements to first be operationalized to develop the final MRs. The same document further states, that management proposes to revisit the 'partially accepted' and 'deferred' responses by the end of Q2 2025 once these functions, structures and arrangements are in place. No meeting summary is available to confirm that this proposal has been accepted by the IPB and that the MRs will indeed be revisited in Q2 2025.

Responding to review question 4, possible adjustments could be:

While the timeframe for developing the MR is three to six weeks before submitting the MR to the EMD for approval, as per the PPU Process Note, and while the timeframe aligns with other organization's practices (see Figure 6), interview data proposes that the given time is not sufficient for reflection and learning, leading to a focus on compliance rather than learning. Extending deadlines for developing MRs, especially during periods of major transitions, could be a suggestion for improvement. Furthermore, to complement the MER Guidelines (see also 1.2 Overview of CGIAR's MR System), embedding a stronger participatory approach into evaluation activities including finalizing recommendations, could address feasibility concerns earlier and would and provide evaluands with advanced time to prepare for the MR, increase users' confidence in evaluation results and ensure individual accountability.

Figure 6. Timeframe for MR development in peer organizations (N-40)
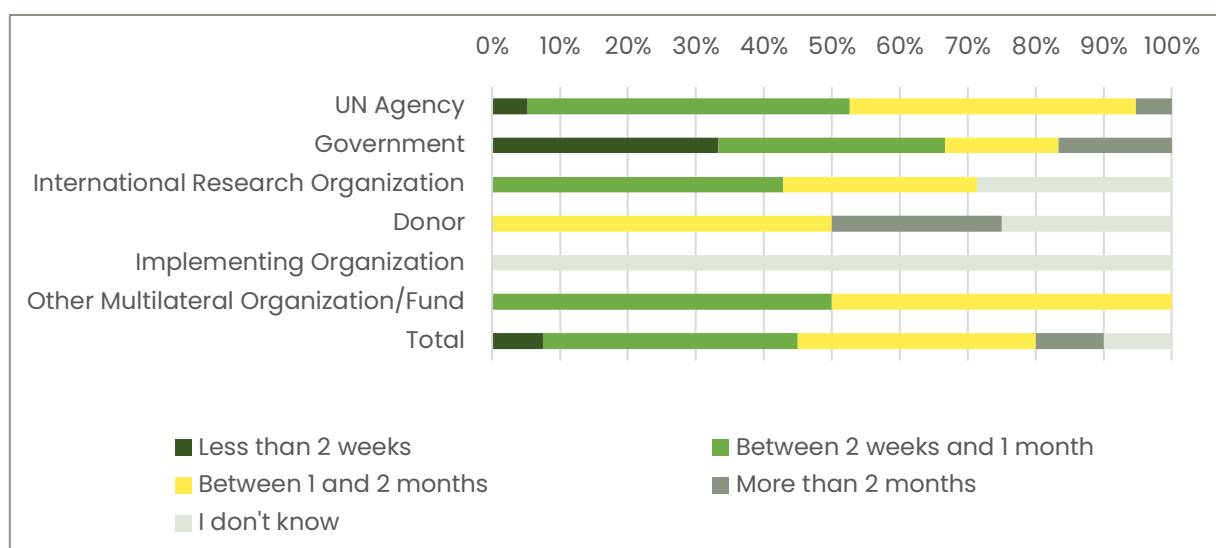
Source: Online Survey conducted by the Evaluation Function of IAES in Q3 and Q4, 2024.

2.4.2 Volume of Recommendations

Document data reveals that evaluations tend to generate a high volume of recommendations (111 recommendations and 140 sub-recommendations for the seven independent evaluations assessed in this review; see also Annex 4 for list of evaluations and respective number of recommendations and sub-recommendations), which can be perceived as overwhelming for teams with limited resources, as

suggested by interview data. It is documented that tracking the high volume of recommendations is a "recurrent challenge", and that "management is considering a review of all open MR Actions by end 2024 to identify core priorities aligned to strategic and operational requirements". Further document data according to the internal review process shared by PPU confirms that the approach and methodology for this internal PPU exercise started in Q4 2024, simultaneously to this very review of the MR System. Although documentation does not reveal how this independent review will inform the internal PPU exercise, the review notes that PPU plans to engage IAES "when appropriate" in the process (see also Finding 3).

Responding to review question 4, possible adjustments could be:

Embedding the stronger participatory approach into evaluation design including finalizing recommendations, as suggested in the section above, could also help here to address the issue of volume and detail of recommendations. Increased engagement during drafting the recommendations allows evaluands to provide feedback on the feasibility and relevance of recommendations before they are finalized. Providing guidelines or a checklist, such as UNEG's checklist for Improved Quality on Evaluation Recommendations, for the process of developing the recommendations could improve the quality and utility of recommendations.

3 Conclusions and Recommendations

The four main review questions outlined in the ToR guide the structure of the conclusions presented within this section. This section also presents three overarching recommendations, logically deriving from findings and conclusions of this review, and presenting clear linkages to these in the Mapping of MR System review findings, conclusions and recommendations in Table 1.

3.1 Conclusions by Review Questions

Conclusion 1–Effectiveness and efficiency of the MR System

The limited availability of sufficiently elaborated data regarding implementation status of recommendations and MR actions, hindered the aimed comprehensive analysis of the MR System's effectiveness and efficiency (see also Limitation 2 and Finding 4). The review found that the CGIAR MR System demonstrates mixed levels of effectiveness and efficiency in contributing to organizational effectiveness, learning, and accountability.

While the MR template is a relatively efficient tool for structured MRs, its effectiveness is contingent on broader systemic and contextual alignment within CGIAR's operations. The current timeframes for MRs are generally sufficient under stable conditions, they become less appropriate however during times of flux. Adjustments such as enhanced engagement at the recommendations' finalization stage, and strategic prioritization of recommendations could significantly improve the process, ensuring timely communication to governance bodies while maintaining the quality and applicability of MRs.

The MR Tracker provides value in organizing and monitoring recommendations and agreed MR actions. However, its full potential is hindered by inconsistent usage of the MR template, a not sufficiently elaborated database, and limited integration with broader systems of other assurance providers such as common elements from Audit and Risk Management. Enhancing training or feedback mechanisms, strengthening the clarity and detail of action plans, and bolstering integration between tracking tools with other institutional systems, can significantly enhance the identifiability and traceability of recommendations and their corresponding actions, and can subsequently make the tool more impactful for its users.

The implementation of action plans is often hindered by systemic challenges, including organizational restructuring, resource limitations, and timing issues. While tools such as the internal MR Tracker aim to improve monitoring, ensuring full implementation requires clear accountability, resource alignment, and prioritization. Addressing these challenges will enhance the relevance and impact of agreed recommendations.

A benchmarking study, conducted by IAES in Q4 2024,[19] confirms these same challenges to be the case in other multilateral organizations. The inconsistent quality of MRs, need for enhanced MR template and guidance, and need for improved buy-in from management were referenced from the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). Global Environment Facility (GEF) reported similar issues, such as lack of clarity in MRs and limited agency participation.

The survey that was addressed to peer organizations and conducted by IAES in Q3 and Q4 2024, revealed that in most cases (62.96%), the evaluation offices themselves are in charge of tracking recommendations from independent evaluations (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Stakeholders in charge of tracking of recommendations in peer organizations (N-27)
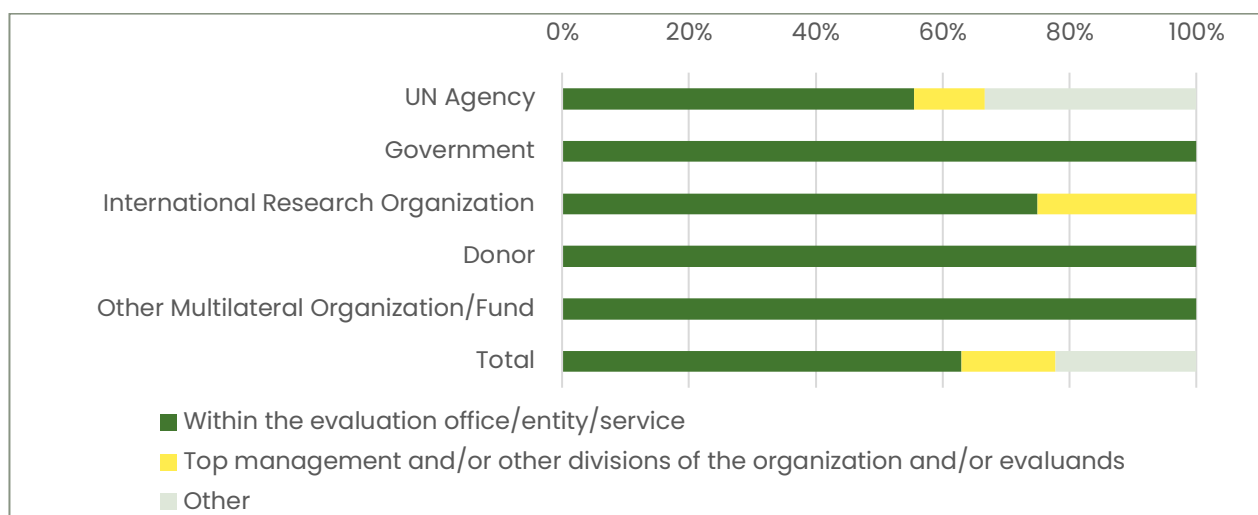
Source: *Online survey conducted by the Evaluation Function of IAES in Q3 and Q4, 2024.*

Conclusion 2–Follow-up and use of evaluation recommendations

The MR System in CGIAR provides a foundational structure for tracking and follow-up on independent evaluation recommendations. However, gaps in enforcement measures (see Finding 6), data comprehensiveness, and feedback mechanisms limit the ability to fully ensure responses and effective use of recommendations. Addressing these challenges through improved processes, enhanced data systems, and strengthened accountability would significantly increase the system's contribution to organizational learning and effectiveness.

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[19] Note: This study was conducted in Q4 2024 and is published on the IAES website.

The MR System includes tools such as the MR template and the MR Tracker, with the MR Tracker monitoring the status of actions as 'completed,' 'on track,' 'not started,' 'delayed,' or 'cancelled.' This supports visibility and accountability for recommendation implementation. And the MR template assigns clear responsibilities for actions, helping to identify individuals or units accountable for follow-up, and provides an initial framework for ensuring compliance. Regular progress reviews conducted by the PPU allow for the identification of inaction and corrective actions.

However, while the system identifies inaction, it lacks strong enforcement mechanisms to ensure corrective actions are implemented. Resource and capacity constraints, along with unclear accountability, further weaken its effectiveness. Progress reporting is limited to basic status indicators without detailed documented evidence of progress or verification of actions. The lack of comprehensive documentation (in relation to a well-defined framework) reduces the ability to track or assess the full impact of recommendations.

There is no system to link recommendation implementation with decision-making or program design, limiting the ability to demonstrate how recommendations inform organizational learning or strategic adjustments. Operational challenges, such as organizational transitions and overlapping responsibilities disrupt implementation efforts. Further, the absence of a coherent MEL system for all centers exacerbates fragmentation in tracking and follow-up.

Conclusion 3-Processes and mechanisms to ensure uptake of lessons learned

CGIAR has several processes and mechanisms in place to capture and disseminate lessons learned, but their effectiveness is constrained by systemic gaps, particularly the lack of a centralized KM system and the underutilization of MEL CoP, which hinders the organization's ability to leverage evaluation insights for continuous learning and strategic decision-making.

The CGIAR Evaluation Framework and Policy set clear expectations for capturing and sharing lessons, by mandating that KM products from evaluations be timely, audience-specific, and actionable. The Evaluation Function conducts comprehensive syntheses of evaluative evidence, such as the 2021 Synthesis of Learning from a Decade of CGIAR Research Programs, a Synthesis Report of the SG evaluations or the Synthesis of Evaluability Assessments, which provide actionable insights into the quality of science, outcomes, and management practices, offering recommendations for future directions. Although the absence of a centralized KM System to systematically capture, document, and disseminate lessons, hinders consistent uptake and leads to the loss of institutional memory, weakening the long-term impact of evaluations. Furthermore, as the current MR System sometimes emphasizes compliance (checking off recommendations) rather than deeper learning and adaptive management, it reduces its potential for fostering organizational improvement.

Inconsistent MELIA practices across centers exacerbate the challenges in documenting and sharing lessons learned comprehensively. While MEL CoP exists to a certain degree (see Finding 9), it is not fully leveraged to connect centers, reduce fragmentation, or share lessons systematically. As evaluation recommendations are primarily implemented at center level, even though they are addressed to CGIAR management, the CGIAR's decentralization makes it difficult to track. A strengthened MELIA system across centers would therefore not only serve these functions but also ensure a systematic dissemination of lessons. But plans are underway to develop a more holistic MELIAF framework, with potential implementation in 2025. This framework could standardize monitoring across the new portfolio.

There are instances of collaboration between evaluation and Internal Audit, such as regular meetings, an advisory study and a survey that integrated evaluation criteria. This synergy helps align learning and risk management objectives.

Conclusion 4–Adjustments in independent evaluative activities

Concluding evidence corresponding to the fourth main review question, that implies a certain degree of self-evaluation for the Evaluation Function at IAES and for CGIAR to learn from best practices from peer organizations, is aligned with the recommendations for this very review in the following section. Mainly, under question four, possible adjustments are proposed regarding the timing of evaluations, the volume of recommendations and guidance on developing recommendations to be embedded in the existing Evaluation Report development guidance. Clear criteria for drafting recommendations, such as relevance and alignment with organizational capacities, improve their quality and adoption. Organizations such as the World Bank and UNDP are known for prioritizing a manageable number of recommendations based on feasibility and potential impact, following the UNEG Norms and Standards, including the UNEG's checklist for Improved Quality on Evaluation Recommendations, which that recommends a maximum of ten recommendations. Incorporating participatory processes, engaging stakeholders early and throughout the evaluation process, especially when drafting and finalizing recommendations, can help address feasibility concerns and build individual ownership and accountability. For CGIAR on corporate level, an enhanced collaborative approach amongst the various stakeholders within the MR System would help improve CGIAR's effectiveness, informed by evidence-based planning and decision-making.

3.2 Recommendations

Tentative recommendations were presented at a validation meeting and a recommendation refinement workshop with main stakeholders within CGIAR's MR System-both took place on 17 December 2024 in Montpellier, France and online. After collective reflection at these meetings and after receiving key stakeholder feedback (from PPU, PCU, D&D, IA and IAES) on the draft version of this report, recommendations were re-phrased and finalized to ensure that the discussed possible measures for implementation are reflected in the wording of the recommendations (see list of participants in Annex 10). UNEG's checklist for Improved Quality on Evaluation Recommendations was applied for this process.

While acknowledging CGIAR's efforts in setting up a MR System to independent evaluations since 2021 and ongoing and planned Initiatives to move forward, the review team proposes three recommendations as principal steps for change. Overarching recommendations are that CGIAR's stakeholders involved in the MR System focus first and foremost on undertaking current activities in a more strategic and collaborative manner towards: 1) improving prioritization and feasibility of recommendations; 2) enhancing the current technical modalities for tracking recommendations and MR actions; and 3) fostering a culture of learning by streamlining processes and reducing fragmentation across centers to leverage insights from independent evaluations.

The review team is sympathetic to the fact that stakeholders have large portfolios and multiple demands in terms of the results they are asked to deliver. However, the review team believes that the evidence points to multiple areas in which collaborative streamlining is necessary to enhance the value of the MR System and to improve CGIAR's effectiveness, informed by evidence-based planning and decision-making.

Each of the three recommendations aims to address different levels of engagement, with more detailed suggestions for possible non-binding and non-exhaustive measures for action plans to be considered when developing the MR for this review._All suggestions for each of the three recommendations can be principal

steps for change for CGIAR's MR System, and are practical and realistic, with implementation actionable and feasible within the next 12 months.

Recommendation 1: The Evaluation Function of IAES should adjust the management of independent evaluations, including the development of recommendations and timelines for MR, to fit changing contexts, and to be able to report annually on the uptake of recommendations to support evidence-based planning, programming, and decision-making across CGIAR. IAES, in its advisory capacity, should ensure that independent evaluations are accompanied by clear suggestions on which stakeholders should be involved in the development of the MR and its implementation.

This recommendation could be implemented with the following suggestions for possible non-binding and non-exhaustive measures for action plans to be considered when developing the MR for this review:

- Evaluation commissioners and implementers to ensure a stronger focus of a participatory approach for finalizing recommendations deriving from findings and conclusions from independent evaluations, by including stakeholders at the final stage of finalizing recommendations (to be implemented by IAES).

Note: This could be done via a 'recommendation refinement' meeting or a co-creation workshop. By finalizing recommendations collaboratively, it allows each party (the external evaluation team and the MR stakeholders) to phrase recommendations and actions in a way so that they correspond with each other.

- Evaluation Function of IAES to develop brief guidelines, including a checklist, for team leads of independent evaluations, for writing recommendations, to ensure a certain degree of prioritization and consistency across evaluation reports. This would ensure that recommendations are aligned with the system's capacity, to be implemented within a 12-month timeframe, and to ensure the maximum of ten recommendations for each evaluation (to be implemented by IAES).

- Conduct an annual review exercise to provide more comprehensive qualitative feedback of the status of recommendations that are reflected in the tracking system (to be implemented by IAES).

Note: This could be complementary to the quantitative Type 3 reporting or simply a more elaborated reporting within the Type 3 reporting. Learning from best practices, such as exercises from peer organizations such as GEF and their Management Action Record (MAR) review could serve as inspiration.

- The Evaluation Function of IAES within its advisory capacity to provide suggestions in the evaluation report process to MR development transmission, to support the uptake of recommendations and to help ensure that the appropriate stakeholders are invited. For example, People & Culture/HR—both at center level—could be involved for recommendations relating to HR matters. IAES could implement this advice in the cover note that is delivered to SIMEC and PPU with the evaluation report, which officially launches the MR process. The suggestions on whom to include would follow the above measure of IAES, together with the independent evaluation team, bringing together all the relevant voices to a recommendation refinement workshop (to be implemented by IAES).

Recommendation 2: CGIAR should revisit the positioning of responsible parties tracking the implementation of recommendations to independent evaluations and its MR actions. Under its new structure, CGIAR should consider this function as a joint responsibility of the Chief Scientist's office, specifically the PPU and PCU. PPU should oversee the tracking of MR actions at the portfolio level, while the PCU should manage tracking at the program level. CGIAR should continue to refine its technical

modalities to enhance the effective tracking of MR actions, followed by a revision of its guiding MR System documents.

This recommendation could be implemented with the following suggestions for possible non-binding and non-exhaustive measures for action plans to be considered when developing the MR for this review:

- By responding to the current internal organizational changes, revisit the positioning of responsible parties tracking the implementation of recommendations to independent evaluations and its MR actions. Within its new structure, CGIAR should recognize this function as a shared responsibility of the Chief Scientist's Office, specifically the PPU and PCU. Guided by the independent and impartial mandate of IAES, the PPU could oversee the tracking of MR actions at portfolio level, while the PCU could manage tracking at program level (to be implemented by Chief Scientist, PPU, PCU, IAES).

- Review the current state of the tool by conducting a needs assessment, including all stakeholders/users of the tool (including IAES, PCU, MEL, evaluand leads), and identify what type of data needs to be collected and what measures of success need to be included. (to be implemented by PPU, PCU, IAES, Digital & Data).

- Build a tracking system that could potentially integrate elements from other actors and assurance providers in the future (e.g., Internal Audit, Risk Management, or other actors that provide the system with evidence-based insights into its effectiveness, efficiency, and impact). Building on resources already invested, and following agile development, the first iteration developed by the digital and data team solutions for Integrated Management could be used as an entry point and could be modified (to be implemented by PPU, PCU, Digital & Data, IAES).

Note: It must be made sure that: 1) all relevant stakeholders are included in the development process; 2) the tracking system is able to capture both quantitative progress indicators and qualitative insights on outcomes; 3) the technical function to document the reason for the implementation status (e.g., 'delayed', 'not yet started') is included; 4) the MR template is implemented, allowing for proper tracking of actions deriving from the main and sub-recommendations, including the option of having more than one action corresponding to one main recommendation (this would need to be revised and reflected in the MR template as well); and 5) the MR data entry system for the response formulation with actions and the tracking of them is designed in a way that ensures that data is accurately integrated and reflected.

- Develop a guidance note for the MR template (or equivalent within the newly developed tracking system) for evaluands to ensure consistency, e.g., to make sure that the field 'overall response' at the top of the MR template is utilized for the evaluand's reflection regarding lessons learned from the evaluation or a type of plan of action (to be implemented by PPU, PCU, IAES).

- Implementing QA processes that include documentation, for MR template and for collecting progress (tracking) data. It is acknowledged that a QA process for collecting the progress (tracking) data is in place already. For this process, only the element of documentation (including the exchange with the evaluand) needs to be added. PCU, as per its role in assessing data quality, could be the leading party (to be implemented by PCU, PPU, IAES).

- Following implemented revisions and changes of MR System elements (including possible suggested measures mentioned above), relevant guiding MR System documents need to be updated and revised, including the PPU Process Note and MER guidelines. The element of cancellation of recommendations could be considered for the revision of the PPU Process Note and the MER guidelines. More specifically, IAES could be notified in advance of any cancellation requests of recommendations, allowing two to three weeks for a formal response, to be documented and to

facilitate IAES required reporting to the committees of the System Council (to be implemented by PCU, PPU, IAES).

Recommendation 3: CGIAR should enhance an organizational culture of learning - where evidence-based planning and programming is applied - by streamlining processes and reducing fragmentation (across centers) to leverage insights from CGIAR's independent evaluations, and lessons learned and best practices deriving from other evidence-based exercises within CGIAR.

This recommendation could be implemented with the following suggestions for possible non-binding and non-exhaustive measures for action plans to be considered when developing the MR for this review:

- Utilize MEL CoP of CGIAR to share lessons learned and best practices across centers, promoting a culture of continuous learning and adaptation (to be implemented by MEL CoP stakeholders responsible party for the planned MELIAF framework).

Note: There may also be implications/new opportunities for engagement within the possibly new MELIAF framework, that could serve as a knowledge base to share lessons learned and best practices.

- Collaborate with MEL personnel to help monitor the recommendation/action implementation at center level to align with the Integrated Partnership Framework and the role of centers in the Global Leadership Team (to be implemented by MEL personnel at center level).

Note: Concrete actions from MRs to respective independent evaluations could be reflected in targets or KPIs in workplans to enhance ownership and accountability.

- Conduct an annual stocktaking exercise to review and reflect on similarities and discrepancies in lessons learned and recommendations provided to the system, to further strengthen engagement between IAES and Internal Audit (to be implemented by IAES, IA).

- Use events and platforms such as CGIAR's annual Science Week to share results with lessons learned and best practices from IAES work, including ISDC, SPIA, and Evaluation Function (to be implemented by ISDC, SPIA, Evaluation Function).

- Institutionalization of a fixed annual agenda item for the System Council to review the status of MR to evaluations which requires an amendment to the IAES ToR to include this new item/role.

Table 1. Mapping of MR System review findings, conclusions and recommendations

Recommendation [in numerical order]	Conclusions [by number(s) of conclusion]	Findings [by number of finding]
Recommendation 1: The Evaluation Function of IAES should adjust the management of independent evaluations, including the development of recommendations and timelines for MR, to fit changing contexts, and to be able to report annually on the uptake of recommendations to support evidence-based planning, programming, and decision-making across CGIAR. IAES, in its advisory capacity, should ensure that independent evaluations are accompanied by clear suggestions on which stakeholders should be involved in the development of the MR and its implementation.	Conclusion 1, 2, 3, 4	Finding 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 11
• ***Suggestion for possible measures for implementation:*** *Evaluation commissioners and implementers to ensure a stronger focus of a participatory approach for finalizing recommendations deriving from findings and conclusions from independent evaluations, by including stakeholders at the final stage, when finalizing the recommendations* (to be implemented by *IAES*).	Conclusion 1, 2, 4	Finding 2, 3, 4, 8, 11
• ***Suggestion for possible measures for implementation:*** *Evaluation Function of IAES to develop brief guidelines, including a checklist, for team leads of independent evaluations, for writing recommendations, to ensure a certain degree of prioritization and consistency across evaluation reports, to ensure that recommendations are phrased to be aligned with the system's capacity, to be implemented within a 12 months' timeframe, and to ensure a maximum of ten recommendations for each evaluation* (to be implemented by *IAES*).	Conclusion 1, 2, 4	Finding 2, 3, 4, 8, 11
• ***Suggestion for possible measures for implementation:*** *Conduct an annual review exercise to provide more comprehensive qualitative feedback of the status of recommendations that are reflected in the tracking system* (to be implemented by IAES).	Conclusion 1, 2, 3	Finding 2, 3, 4, 8, 9
• ***Suggestion for possible measures for implementation:*** *The Evaluation Function of IAES within its advisory capacity, provide advice in the process at the time of evaluation report to MR development transmission, to support the uptake of recommendations and to help ensure that adequate stakeholders are invited to the table. For example, People & Culture/HR—both at center level—could be involved when recommendations relate to HR matters. IAES could implement this in the cover note that is delivered to SIMEC and PPU with the evaluation report, which officially launches the MR process. This would follow the above-mentioned possible measure, of IAES, together with the independent evaluation*	Conclusion 1, 2, 3, 4	Finding 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 11

Recommendation *[in numerical order]*	Conclusions *[by number(s) of conclusion]*	Findings *[by number of finding]*
team, bringing together all the relevant voices to a recommendation refinement workshop (to be implemented by IAES).		
Recommendation 2: CGIAR should revisit the positioning of responsible parties tracking the implementation of recommendations to independent evaluations and its MR actions. Under its new structure, CGIAR should consider this function as a joint responsibility of the Chief Scientist's office, specifically the PPU and PCU. PPU should oversee the tracking of MR actions at the portfolio level, while the PCU should manage tracking at the program level. CGIAR should continue to refine its technical modalities to enhance the effective tracking of MR actions, followed by a revision of its guiding MR System documents.	Conclusion 1, 2	Finding 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10
▪ ***Suggestion for possible measures for implementation:*** *By responding to the current internal organizational changes, revisit the positioning of responsible parties tracking the implementation of recommendations to independent evaluations and its MR actions. Within its new structure, CGIAR should recognize this function as a shared responsibility of the Chief Scientist's office, specifically the PPU and PCU. Guided by the independent and impartial mandate of IAES, the PPU could oversee the tracking of MR actions at portfolio level, while the PCU could manage tracking at the program level* (to be implemented by e.g. Chief Scientist, PPU, PCU, IAES).	Conclusion 1, 2	Finding 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10
▪ ***Suggestion for possible measures for implementation:*** *Review the current state of the tool by conducting a needs assessment, including all stakeholders/users of the tool (including IAES, PCU, MEL, evaluand leads), and identify what type of data needs to be collected, what measures of success need to be included* (to be implemented by PPU, PCU, IAES, Digital & Data).	Conclusion 1	Finding 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8
▪ ***Suggestion for possible measures for implementation:*** *Build a tracking system that could potentially integrate elements from other actors and assurance providers in the future (e.g. Internal Audit, Risk Management, or other actors that provide the system with evidence-based insights into its effectiveness, efficiency, and impact). By welcoming resources already spent, and following the agile development, the first iteration developed by the department of Digital Solutions for Integrated Management could be used as an entry point and could be modified* (to be implemented by PPU, PCU, Digital & Data, IAES).	Conclusion 1, 2	Finding 4, 10

Recommendation *[in numerical order]*	Conclusions *[by number(s) of conclusion]*	Findings *[by number of finding]*
• ***Suggestion for possible measures for implementation:*** *Develop a guidance note for the MR template (or equivalent within the newly developed tracking system) for evaluands to ensure consistency, e.g. to make sure that the field 'overall response' at the top of the MR template is utilized for the evaluand's reflection regarding lessons learned from the evaluation or a type of plan of action* (to be implemented by PPU, PCU, IAES).	Conclusion 1, 2	Finding 1, 2, 3, 6,
• ***Suggestion for possible measures for implementation:*** *Implement QA processes that include documentation for MR template and for collecting progress (tracking) data. It is acknowledged that a QA process for collecting the progress (tracking) data is in place already. For this process, only the element of documentation (including the exchange with the evaluand) needs to be added. PCU, as per its role in assessing data quality, could be the leading party* (to be implemented by *PCU, PPU, IAES*).	Conclusion 1, 2	Finding 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8
• ***Suggestion for possible measures for implementation:*** *Follow implemented revisions and changes of MR System elements (including possible suggested measures mentioned above), relevant guiding MR System documents need to be updated and revised, including the PPU Process Note and MER guidelines. The element of cancellation of recommendations could be considered for the revision of the PPU Process Note and the MER guidelines. More specifically, IAES could be notified in advance of any cancellation requests of recommendations, allowing two to three weeks for a formal response, to be documented and to facilitate IAES required reporting to the committees of System Council* (to be implemented by PCU, PPU, IAES).	Conclusion 1, 4	Finding 1, 2, 5, 11
Recommendation 3: CGIAR should enhance an organizational culture of learning-where evidence-based planning and programming is applied-by streamlining processes and reducing fragmentation (across centers) to leverage insights from CGIAR's independent evaluations, and lessons learned and best practices deriving from other evidence-based exercises within CGIAR.	Conclusion 2	Finding 6, 8, 9
• ***Suggestion for possible measures for implementation:*** *Utilize MEL CoP of CGIAR to share lessons learned and best practices across centers, promoting a culture of continuous learning and adaptation* (to be implemented by MEL CoP stakeholders, responsible party for planned MELIAF framework).	Conclusion 2	Finding 6, 8, 9

Recommendation *[in numerical order]*	Conclusions *[by number(s) of conclusion]*	Findings *[by number of finding]*
• ***Suggestion for possible measures for implementation:*** *Collaborate with MEL personnel that could support monitoring the recommendation/action implementation at center level to align to the Integrated Partnership Framework and the role of centers in the Global Leadership Team* (to be implemented by MEL personnel at center level).	Conclusion 2	Finding 6, 8, 9
• ***Suggestion for possible measures for implementation:*** *Conduct an annual stocktaking exercise to review and reflect on similarities and discrepancies in lessons learned and recommendations provided to the system, to further strengthen engagement between IAES and Internal Audit* (to be implemented by IAES, IA).	Conclusion 3	Finding 10
• ***Suggestion for possible measures for implementation:*** *Use platforms such as CGIAR's annual Science Week to share lessons learned and best practices from IAES Initiatives* (including ISDC, SPIA, Evaluation Function).	Conclusion 2	Finding 8, 9
• ***Suggestion for possible measures for implementation:*** Institutionalization of a fixed annual agenda item for the System Council to review the status of MR to evaluations which requires an amendment to the IAES ToR to include this new item/role.		

Annexes

Annexes are available to download online at: https://iaes.cgiar.org/evaluation/publications/review-cgiar-management-response-system-independent-evaluations

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