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Cross-CRP Analysis of Capacity Development in the 2017-2022 CGIAR Research Program Portfolio (CRP2)



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CONTEXT

The System Level Outcomes and Intermediate Development Outcomes (IDOs) expected by the CGIAR portfolio cannot be achieved without a broad array of partnerships with other organizations. The activities of the CRPs can be considered largely as action research, where changes in practice, procedures, organization, and the behavior of these partners, as well as in the CGIAR centers themselves, is expected; in other words, where all partners are enabled or have increased capacity to innovate. Many of the sub-IDOs that form part of the CGIAR's [Strategy and Results Framework 2016-2030](#) (SRF) cannot be achieved without either organizational capacity development of partner organizations, or institutional capacity development.

This brief provides a summary analysis of the sections of the CRP2 proposals related to capacity development (CD) and assesses whether the 10 elements of the [Capacity Development Framework](#)¹ were reflected in the proposals and whether the CD outputs and outcomes were reflected in the Theories of Change and Impact Pathways.

FINDINGS

It is evident that there is still considerable variation across the System with respect to capacity development and uncertainty as to how to integrate the Capacity Development Framework (CDF) into the CRP proposals. There appears to be a range of thinking, both between and also within individual CRPs—from the narrower and more traditional CGIAR view that capacity development consists mainly of training, to a broader view that virtually all CRP activities can be defined as 'capacity development.' As such, it is difficult to separate 'capacity development' activities from other actions such as research; partnership development; policy development; communications; monitoring, evaluation, and learning; etc., and it is evident that many CRPs struggled to do this.

Most CRP proposals considered the 10 elements of the CDF and expressed the degree to which they would address them in terms of 'High,' 'Medium,' or 'Low' intensity. Overall, the following elements received the most emphasis: Element 2 (Design and delivery of innovative learning materials and approaches), Element 5 (Gender-sensitive approaches throughout capacity devel-

¹ <https://library.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10947/3414/CGIAR%20Capacity%20Development%20Framework%20Working%20Draft.pdf>

opment), and Element 6 (Institutional strengthening). Element 2 may reflect an emphasis on training of ‘next users’ (e.g. through conventional face-to-face courses and workshops, and virtual training using a variety of platforms and mechanisms established in previous phase/projects). As might be expected, Element 6 is well reflected in the Global Integrating Programs. Element 10 (Capacity to innovate) appears to indicate the strong emphasis that CRPs have placed on innovation platforms as a strategy to interact with partners and research users, especially at local level.

Emphasis on Element 1 (Needs analysis) varied. While some CRPs mentioned that capacity-development needs were fairly well established in previous phases, it is not clear that all CRPs have a good current understanding of CD needs, or propose to adequately analyze such needs. Relatively less emphasis on Element 3 (Partnering capacities of CRPs and CGIAR centers) suggests that CRPs do not see this as a main issue—although this confidence might appear to be misplaced given the results of previous surveys by CGIAR partners, and also given the obvious critical importance of many types of partners to the achievement of the CRP development outcomes. Another element that received relatively less attention was Element 7 (Monitoring and evaluation of capacity development), perhaps because many proposals integrate this into the monitoring, evaluation, learning, and impact-assessment (MELIA) frameworks described in different sections of the proposals.

The interrelatedness of the capacity development sub-IDOS with other sub-IDOs across the Strategy and Results Framework makes any interpretation and allocation of budgets to one or another sub-IDO particularly difficult. Similarly, the comprehensive and inevitably summarized nature and style of the Theories of Change (ToCs) described at the CRP and even Flagship level make it difficult to assess if capacity development has been adequately integrated into the results framework. Different CRPs express the ToCs in different ways. Some specifically include outputs, outcomes, and sub-IDOs that relate to CD or express these in CD language, others do not; but, as evidenced from the descriptive parts of the proposals, this does not necessarily mean that CD has not been considered or integrated.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The interpretation of capacity development used in the CDF is in line with current global thinking on CD, and the Framework has likely contributed to a more integrated approach to CD in the CRPs than might otherwise have been the case. Still, it is difficult to assess how capacity-development actions will be carried out in practice. This will largely depend on how the CGIAR centers interact with non-CGIAR partners—whether they are regarded as ‘next users’ who are expected to simply adopt research methods and technologies generated by the CRPs (i.e., under a ‘transfer of technology paradigm’), or as equal partners in an innovation network/system where such procedures and technologies are co-developed and co-adapted to the needs of partners.

Notable also in both the CDF and the proposals is the concept of capacity development as an activity to enhance the capacity of partners (either ‘research’ or ‘development’ partners). More emphasis is needed on the development of capacity of the CGIAR centers themselves, particularly in terms of functional capacities (such as the capacity to collaborate, form effective partnerships, learn, etc.), although it may be that these will be taken up under other headings such as partnership formation, MELIA activities, etc.

It is obvious from the proposals that an exchange of capacity-development experience between centers and CRPs, as well as continued support from the CD Community of Practice (CoP) is expected. Even so, it appears that there is a relative lack of senior staff dedicated to CD in most CRPs, compared to other cross-cutting issues. If capacity development is well integrated with mainstream Flagships and clusters of activities, this may not be a problem, but it is not discernible that there will be sufficient and dedicated resources for each CRP to ensure a coherent approach to CD. Neither is it clear if the CoP will have sufficient resources to effectively continue to develop capacity-development concepts across the System, develop guidelines and procedures on how to integrate CD with research and development, monitor progress, capitalize on the experiences gained in the different CRPs, and diffuse best practice throughout the System. It is notable that Element 9 of the Capacity Development Framework (Research in capacity development) was the least emphasized by the CRPs.

