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Report of the First External Review of the Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis (PRGA)

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CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

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THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS:

- Science Council Commentary
- PRGA Response to the External Review Report
- First PRGA External Review Report Transmittal letter and Report of the Panel on the First External Review of the Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis

Science Council of the CGIAR
Commentary on the External Review of the
Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis (PRGA)

May 2007

The Report of the external review of PRGA was discussed at the Seventh Meeting of the Science Council (SC), held at ICRISAT, Patancheru, India. Dr. Thomas Walker, the Panel Chair presented to the Council the Panel's main findings and recommendations via videoconference. The PRGA Board Chair, Dr Janice Jiggins gave the Program's comments to the review via teleconference. The SC had received the joint formal response from the program and the host Center, CIAT. In general the program and CIAT agreed fully with the analysis, the 11 recommendations and critique of the review.

The SC commends the Panel for a perceptive and a well written review that provides a credible analysis of the Program. The SC broadly agrees with most of the recommendations but it feels that the Program is at a turning point where it needs to change to provide effective, international research on focused aspects of Participatory Research (**PR**), on Gender Analysis (**GA**) and on Impact Assessment (**IA**) to contribute to system priorities. Without change the program would serve mainly in advocacy and as a support for its constituency among the NARS and NGOs active at the local level in this area.

This review was unique compared to other Systemwide program reviews in that it included a sub-set of Terms of Reference tasking the Panel to assess—through a literature review—the evidence of *ex post* impacts of participatory research both within the PRGA, among CGIAR Centers and outside the CGIAR. The Panel was assisted in this supplementary task by a SC Secretariat consultant. The Panel Chair also reported in his presentation that the review had focused heavily on the substance matters of the program and less on governance, management and process issues. Furthermore, the SC was informed that the program was being seriously affected by the financial problems of its host Center at the time of the review.

The PRGA Program was initiated in response to a call largely outside the CGIAR Centers and subsequently it has developed a large constituency with Centers and among NARS and NGOs. It had a Center Commissioned External Review (CCER) in 2000, which the Panel used as input. The SC was pleased to learn that the Program has been productive during its 10 years of operation, considering its relatively small size in terms of budget and core staff, in publishing and establishing partnerships for small grants. However, the achievements have been mostly related to Participatory Plant Breeding (**PPB**). During the Program's two phases it has focused on PPB and Participatory Natural Resources Management (**PNRM**) during the first phase and predominantly on GA and IA during the second phase. The SC's commentary in the following pages discusses these four aspects and the Program's operations, and provides recommendations about the Program's future.

Participatory Plant Breeding

The Report includes a good discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of PPB, differentiating it from participatory varietal selection. The Panel draws its conclusions from several sources of information and indicates that the PRGA's PPB work has been successful both in terms of advocacy and enhancing IA methodology. Three large programs, two of them within the CGIAR, have been in operation for a number of years and there has been proliferation of

participatory breeding activities by national systems in developing countries. Although the Panel concludes that the Program has contributed significantly to the development of PPB, which was at its early stages when the program began, the Program's contribution to this growing interest outside the CGIAR is not quite clear. The lack of attribution of this success to the Program may be because it passed on funds to partners in small grants, particularly during the first phase that focused on PPB. To some extent a Program objective has been achieved in that participatory methods are being used outside CGIAR. The Panel observes that for several reasons PPB has not been widely adopted in the CGIAR and concludes that a lot of work is still needed in order to make PPB more efficient and to replicate the positive experiences in SSA, where PPB is slowly expanding.

The SC notes the Panel's observation that PPB has potential particularly in marginal areas with slow varietal turn-over or relying on landraces. The SC considers that in developing site-specific technologies, NARS have a key role with CGIAR support. The CGIAR involvement should focus on the IPG component of such targeted breeding particularly as related to PPB research process with broad applicability. Conventional breeding has evolved to incorporate several specific attributes from participatory research particularly relevant in heterogeneous rainfed environments. Such changes are evident in many of the rainfed breeding programs of the CGIAR i.e. rainfed rice, drought tolerant maize in Africa and many others. These changes, focusing on farmer defined traits, sampling of the farmer target environments in earlier stages of the breeding process, varietal release and less centralized seed systems should increase varietal adoption. Thus the SC strongly endorses the Panel's view of the need for better integrating both approaches in a congruent manner and also linking biotechnological tools such as marker assisted selection with eliciting farmer-desired traits, which the Panel notes as an emerging trend.

The efficacy of PPB has not yet been scientifically demonstrated, and systematic documentation of *ex post* impacts with appropriate counterfactuals is needed to show where and when PPB is cost effective and where it is not. The dearth of adoption data on cultivars derived from PPB also needs to be rectified. The SC does not think that experimental studies that pit the most relevant components of emerging PPB models against each other are a priority. Rather, a compilation of evidence that allows PPB to be compared with other breeding approaches would be valuable, particularly in environments where both approaches are practiced. Most of the studies on impact have focused at the results but not the specific process of PPB. Also the IA studies cited in the Report were virtually all *ex ante* studies using assumptions about potential impacts rather than measured differentials between PPB approaches and alternatives in an *ex post* context.

The SC recommends that the Program's work on PPB be continued for a third phase (3-5 years) placing priority on further compiling and assessing the existing ex post impact evidence and conducting a comprehensive ex post IA of the successful PPB cases identified by the Panel.

Further the SC suggests that the Program is encouraged to document the converging experiences between the PPB and so called conventional breeding particularly for the major rainfed systems. The SC notes that these types of discussions are already under way (see for example the recent Workshop on participatory Plant Breeding and Variety release in Jordan, ICARDA, 2007) and in its view the Program can facilitate the development of an effective breeding system for rainfed areas that focus on IPG outputs.

Participatory Natural Resources Management

The Panel reports that in addressing PNRM, the program has had a patchy history. There has been considerable staff turn over and the program has lacked focus. There has been little impact even though PNRM featured prominently in the early phase small competitive grants. The Panel notes a concern and disquiet about achieving focus even in the founding proposal. The Panel has proposed some options to regain focus, one of which is to base the PRGA work on NRM on affiliation with active NRM research in the CGIAR. The SC would have liked the Panel to further elaborate on how the participatory methods in NRM might be incorporated into the work being done by the Inter-Center Working Group in Integrated NRM. This group has been developing participatory paradigms with partners for a number of years.

Thus the SC agrees with the Panel's recommendation and suggests that the PNRM research component of the Program be integrated into the activities of the Inter-Center INRM Working Group.

Gender Analysis

The component of gender analysis in research was shifted from the Gender and Diversity Program to PRGA in 1997. It was planned initially as a cross cutting (across NRM and PPB) theme of the PRGA. The Panel notes that the consolidation of GA within PR created uneasiness with little achievement in the early phase. In the 2nd phase of the PRGA the focus was more on an advocacy role in "mainstreaming" GA approaches and the Panel notes, regrettably, a lack of focus on building a constituency of gender researchers and practioners inside the CGIAR and beyond. It is striking that even the more successful PPB does not seem to have had an explicit GA component that would have provided lessons for other participatory research or research in general. The SC finds it highly regrettable that the Program has not had influence within the CGIAR on undertaking research on GA leading then to mainstreaming. The SC believes that restricting the GA to participatory research only has limited the scope and subsequently the efficacy of the activities. The SC notes that such research is happening in isolated areas (e.g. see the recent EPMR of ILRI which commends the GA work of the Center and work at IRRI that was highlighted in the Report) and is a missed opportunity for the PRGA. The SC also takes note that GA under the G&D program did not strengthen the research issues , ones in the SC view are in most need of been strengthening.

The Panel finds, however, that the PRGA has done some good work with NARS in mainstreaming GA, mostly in Africa. The SC notes in the Program's response the reference to its purpose to effect change in the research system, including institutional change and how these changes influence gender relations. Even so, the Panel have observed limited success. The factors that may have contributed to the limited impact and influence in GA are likely to include the focus on advocacy observed by the Panel, the lack of research with empirical applications, and the Program's perceived limited interactions with the CGIAR Centers. The SC fully agrees that there is need to accelerate GA into the wider CGIAR system (across all research themes).

In summary, the SC sees a real need for more focused research on GA leading to mainstreaming GA into all CGIAR research. This is not being achieved in the current PRGA program (nor was it achieved when the GA was part of the Gender and Diversity program). The SC urges the Alliance to consider how this might be best achieved either in phasing out the PR component of the PRGA in order then to focus on the GA or in finding other instruments to build the critical mass among the Centers.

Impact Assessment

The Panel was charged to evaluate both the impact and influence of the PRGA program. The review team provided an assessment of the publications produced by the program and commented that although the program has produced a very large number of publications, including five "success stories" that the Panel has considered well documented, and other publications on IA, the documents are relatively few and have largely been found in the grey literature. A citation analysis revealed that too little has been published in high quality journals to enhance the Program's influence and impact.

The Panel estimates that between 10-20% of total CG expenditure, roughly US$ 40-80M per year, has been spent on PR related work over the last 10 years. This is a significant sum. From this level of sustained investment one would have expected to see considerably more documented evidence of impacts *ex post*. Indeed, as early as 1994, it was recognized that empirical evidence on the impact of PR was scanty (Okali, Sumberg, and Farrington, 1994), a point highlighted in the founding proposal of the PRGA. The CCER of 2000 further recommended that there was a need to "generate convincing evidence about the usefulness of participatory methods for improving research efficiency, targeting specific beneficiary groups and meeting CGIAR goals of poverty alleviation and protecting the environment". Notwithstanding the contributions made by the PRGA with respect to conceptual and methodological advances in IA—an area where the program has clearly made progress—the SC believes the program has been deficient in undertaking *ex post* IA case studies of PR methods. The SC is not persuaded by the conclusions drawn by the Panel that the impacts of PR have been adequately documented (p. 22). This is not well founded by the analysis in the literature review of PR impact studies undertaken to inform the Panel's deliberations. The five 'success stories', which are not clearly identified in the Panel's Report do not constitute sufficient empirical evidence. This is unfortunate, as having empirical studies using the novel frameworks developed by the PRGA could have validated and enhanced the credibility of the new concepts and methods.

The Panel suggests that because there are very few studies reported at this point it would not be worthwhile in engaging in a meta-evaluation of *ex post* impacts of PR. It recommends that the Program should continue investing its efforts in IA with emphasis on quantifying the impact benefits to different groups. The SC is in agreement with this recommendation. However, as indicated above regarding PPB, documenting benefits will not by itself persuade researchers to adopt that approach unless they see that it is also more cost-effective than what they have been doing, which argues for more comprehensive *ex post* IA studies that compare not only benefits but costs, and especially in terms of target groups reached. In the absence of experimental comparisons, and considering participatory approaches beyond breeding, it would be useful to assemble an inventory of benefits against costs of as many PR projects as possible – as a basis of comparison with other non-PR project investments. Unless this is done, it is doubtful if PR will ever be mainstreamed in the CGIAR or the NARS. Additionally, as most of the IA literature in the literature review could not be classified as *ex post* IA, this provides an added reason why much more emphasis should be placed on the conduct of well designed *ex post* IA case studies in the future.

Governance and Management

The Panel found the Program to be well-governed and well-managed in general. The Program has had an active Advisory Board and despite the recent financial difficulties, the host Center has been supportive of the Program. The SC agrees with the Panel's analysis on the importance of good interaction between the host Center, the Advisory Board and scientists of different

disciplines. The SC notes that the Program could not provide accurate information on how much of its funding had passed through to small grants, which makes the assessment of the Program's contribution versus the partners' contributions to the overall influence and impact difficult.

The SC notes that the Program's response includes as annex a draft strategy for a proposed third phase of PRGA. ***The SC recommends that a new strategy be formulated only after there is agreement on the future role of the Systemwide program.***

In conclusion, the SC recommends that:

i) ***the Program's third phase should focus on PPB (mainly documenting its impact and on bringing together the elements of PPB and the conventional breeding to enhance international public good research particularly for rainfed environments);***

ii) ***research on PNRM be integrated into the Inter-Center INRM Working Group; and***

iii) ***the Alliance of CGIAR Centers define how best to develop a critical mass of researchers in GA that will ultimately lead to its mainstreaming in all CGIAR Centers and Programs.***

PRGA Program Response to the External Review Report

The PRGA staff Advisory Board (AB) and CIAT appreciates the effort the EPMR took to understand the PRGA, its history and achievements. The EPMR's judgment that the program "has recorded several noteworthy achievements" and that "continuation is warranted" is welcomed.

The AB broadly accepts the assessments made as well as the criticisms of specific areas of the PRGA's work. A detailed response is given below.

Impact Assessment: recognizing the importance of both conventional economic and process-oriented impact assessment studies

Providing compelling empirical evidence of the impacts of participatory research has been a major goal of the PRGA Program since its initiation. The number of our published Impact Assessment documents over the past 5 years supports the conclusion that the Program has well reached that goal. We are pleased to note that the EPMR report recognizes the high quality of our "conventional" economic ex post impact assessment work, but we had expected an acknowledgment of an equal importance of process-oriented documentation of impacts, associated with the incorporation of participatory research (PR) and gender analysis (GA) in research processes.

To accomplish this major Program goal of substantial body of empirical evidence has required first convincing researchers to see value in assessing the impact of a participatory research approach, and forming a network of people interested in working together to accomplish this goal. Furthermore, reaching this goal has required developing frameworks for assessing the impacts of the PR methods as compared to the impacts of technologies alone, developing and testing some specific tools and methodologies for such assessment, conducting case studies, organizing workshops and international meetings to build the impact assessment capacity in the CG system and to promote mutual leaning among the impact assessment practitioners and maintaining the network amongst them, and providing support and backstopping to the centers conducting impact studies of participatory research.

The Science Council Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) organized a meeting in 2001 in Costa Rica that focused on the question "Why has impact assessment not had more impact?" The meeting gave clear direction for PRGA Program's second phase of the impact assessment work. Through workshops and networks, the Program has promoted cross-center mutual learning among the scientists, which should result in the increasing recognition of the value of involving the ultimate beneficiaries in research and development processes. Ultimately this serves to promote the understanding why impact assessment should move beyond simple project accountability and attribution to including learning about effective research processes, including the organizational changes necessary to reach the poor and to have sustainable impact on their livelihoods. Several years of Program efforts process-oriented impact assessment is now being brought to public domain in two special issue peer-reviewed journals[1] in 2007 and 2008.

[1] Development in Practice and Experimental Agriculture.

Positioning of EPMR within conventional frame—missing the added value of institutional change and transformation processes

A critical dimension not fully acknowledged in the report, and which resulted from considerable interaction between Program staff, Board members and the Review team, was the strategic positioning of the PRGA to effect change in the research systems. Such research will be focused on understanding, measuring, assessing the processes of institutional change; and, how such transformations influence gender relations. Such research will be a public good in that it will influence future research to critically assess its role in influencing change in unequal gender relations.

Relations with G&D

It is indeed the case that the relations between G&D and the PRGA have been sporadic. This is attributable to three main causes.

1. The goals of the two programs are complementary but non-substitutable. G&D aims to support the recruitment and development of women and other, 'under-represented' persons in their professional careers within the CG system; the PRGA aims to support the development of scientific capacity to include the CG's clients and stakeholders in R&D and to adopt gender-sensitive approaches to technology development.

2. The PRGA, long before the G&D program was up and running, encountered many requests for personnel management advice, counseling and career support by individual men and particularly women staff, which it has not felt itself qualified to address. The advent of the G&D has meant that the PRGA thankfully relinquished the meeting of these needs to the G&D program.

3. The PRGA has successively tested the efficacy of a range of strategies to advance its proper aims vis a vis the CG centers – a part time gender specialist; center liaisons with PR & GA advocacy roles; training and mentoring; portfolio inventories; workshops and seminars; involving senior scientists in action research; an internet based 'list serve' mechanism, etc. As the G&D found its feet, it became clear that the G&D program was better equipped to take the lead in relation to some of these strategies since it is more directly focused on staffing and career development issues within the centers (e.g. advocacy, mentoring). In other cases (e.g. a part time gender specialist, the list serve) the results have not proved their worth). Others have paid off, with considerable success (e.g. involving senior scientists in action researching.

However, the PRGA agrees the time is ripe to discuss with G&D the PRGA's new program outline and to explore further the possibilities for shared activities.

NRM, in context of meta review of SWEPs, a role for PRGA is integrated

The PRGA accepts that the NRM work of the PRGA has lapsed over the last year. Its earlier work, although generating considerable publications, faced the common difficulty experienced throughout the CG, of maintaining focus and generic impact. The PRGA proposes to take up the NRM theme in its new program strategy principally in terms of PPB and biodiversity conservation (theme 1); African (women) seed entrepreneurs and soil mosaics (theme 2). (See Annex)

Rural institutions: CGIAR system priority 5c

The CG system priority no Priority 5c: rural institutions and their governance states "The CGIAR must better understand how rural organizations (including farmer organizations, women's producer organizations and private-public-CSO partnerships) can be strengthened and how they and other rural innovation systems contribute to sustainable agricultural development and enhanced technological and institutional change."

The EPMR has not commented on the significance of the PRGA's work on PPB as an institutional innovation that has influenced many national agricultural innovation systems, including the organizations of poor farmers. Following the definition of institutions subscribed to by sociologists and the new institutional economics, as "rules and norms" (as distinct from organizations), PPB involves numerous innovations in the ways that (a) national innovation systems conduct the research process and (b) farmers organize locally and in some cases, at national scale, to generate and manage plant genetic diversity. These institutional innovations have been shown empirically to reduce the time taken to get seed of acceptable varieties into the hands of small farmers.

Breeders in national programs throughout the world – e.g. in Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, Honduras, Venezuela, Morocco, Yemen, Syria, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Kenya, Malawi, China, Nepal, Vietnam -- have changed the norms and rules that structure their research programs' work with farmers as a result of the methodological innovations involved in PPB. In turn this has strengthened the capacity of farmer organizations to (a) make a demand on formal research systems to draw down technological innovations (b) exercise agency in other areas, such as the control over local biodiversity and the production and distribution of "farmer-improved seed". What is clear, however, is that the Program's work and in particular, its impact analysis has to the present, focused on understanding the "research side" of this change process. Future work needs to correct this balance and focus more on understanding how PPB strengthens farmer organization.

Under phase II, a deeper theoretical exploration of processes of transformational change was initiated and is ongoing. This has relevance for 'digging into' the lessons learned about gender-sensitive and pro-poor development, strategies for change, multi-stakeholder development of food chains, and livelihood diversification. The PRGA has also conducted impact studies that included the role of various partnership arrangements (involving public, private commercial, and civil society partners), and R&D consortia (such as ASERECA, The Eastern Himalayan Network).

PRGA's boundary spanning role: challenging bio-physical scientists to address quality and processes that determine pro-poor impact

An emphasis is needed on the strategic positioning of the Program to effect change by challenging the often uncritical practices of bio-physical research to address the quality and processes that determine pro-poor impact. Future research by the PRGA will focus on:

- Expanding the 'tool kit' for conceptualizing, understanding, measuring and assessing change, particularly as it relates to change in women's status
- Understanding the social dimensions of technology
- Challenging the uncritical concepts of science as a corporate activity and governance.

PPB- forward strategy

The report makes considerable mention of the progress that has been achieved in PPB. However the future role of PPB has to be considered in light of developments in innovative methodological approaches to PPB, particularly in the context of a changing agro-food environment. The new PRGA strategy for PPB includes the research in the:

- Broadening the genetic basis of poor people's crops
- Maximizing the use of agro-biodiversity for diversified livelihoods
- PPB as a tool for implementing farmers' rights

Budget strategy 2007 and beyond

The initial budget strategy is outlined in the program outline attached (see Annex). It is conditional on finding and appointing as soon as possible a new contract staff person who can take the lead in proposal writing and fund-raising, with the help of the existing staff, the AB, and CIAT.

CIAT Management Comments

CIAT particularly endorses the first and principle Panel recommendation that the performance of the PRGA warrants its continuation. Likewise CIAT agrees that PPB research should be continued (recommendation 2) and that attention to participatory NRM research should be strengthened, subject to the availability of additional funds (recommendation 3). CIAT agrees with the fourth recommendation on the importance of PRGA efforts to spread gender analysis throughout the CGIAR system, and fully concurs with the analysis of the PRGA staff on the considerations involving options for cooperation with the G&D Program which has a very distinct purpose. Funding for a competitive grants program could be useful if it could be obtained (recommendation 5). The PRGA Advisory Board has been recently formally linked to the CIAT Board of Trustees, and this should provide an importance governance link between CIAT & the PRGA (recommendation 6). To strengthen ties with the CIAT research community, an important practical step would be to post staff recruited for the PRGA in the future with CIAT programs, probably most helpfully at headquarters subject to other considerations. CIAT shares the Panel view of its seventh recommendation that impact assessment research has been and should continue to be an important part of the PRGA research agenda. CIAT agrees on the importance of publishing research in peer reviewed journals and the utility of additional graduate students for this purpose (recommendation 8). Likewise the good practice manuals can be an important program output as noted in recommendation 9. Of course the PRGA can have some outputs of both types, (journal articles and manuals) but clearly resource limitations will call for strategic choices about how much to emphasize each, and there will be further tradeoffs in the amount of attention to devote to short policy briefs (recommendation 11). All types of these publications have some value and there will probably always be a demand for more of each.

Annex

Concept Note: new SW PRGA program strategy

The new program is the outcome of successive discussions at PRGA-AB meetings, and with the EMPR. It was agreed in outline at the AB28.02 – 02.03. 2007. It comprises three thematic areas, and five supporting actions for mainstreaming gender research. Impact Assessment research is built into the program as a cross-cutting activity.

The three thematic areas are as follows:

Theme 1: New Developments in Participatory Plant Breeding (PPB)

This theme encompasses the following research sub-activities:

i. The development and/or application of new methods within PPB for maximizing the use of agro-biodiversity. The focus here is on methodological research that supports the diversification of poor people's livelihoods in agro-food chains

ii. PPB to support the broadening of the genetic base of poor people's crops

iii. PPB as an implementation tool for Farmers' Rights

Funding possibilities:

i. PRGA is included in a concept note developed by ICARDA in close cooperation with its CSO partners and INRA, for an ***"International Conference on Farmers' knowledge"***, submitted March 14th by Ceccarelli/ICARDA to the ***"Enhancing the Impact of Research for Development: A Pilot Competitive Grants Program to support innovative partnership and projects"***,

ii. Bhuwon Sthapit, John Witcombe, and Dr Joshi have offered to develop a draft proposal encompassing 1-iii in association with Asian partners (CSO, NARs, IPGRI), with potential funders already interested.

Theme 2: Institutional Innovations in Africa's Seed and Seedling Revolution

This theme encompasses the following research sub-activities:

i. Learning from women's seed and seedling commercial enterprises

ii. Integrating the CG's and NARs' public good outputs in poor people's seed value chains

iii. Development of methodologies for creating and applying 'good fits' among highly diverse soil mosaics, farmers' seeds preferences, and seed supply systems

This theme seeks to capitalize on proposed and existing investments in seed systems that can support Africa's 'rainbow revolution'. It is an outgrowth of existing work with ASERECA on the mainstreaming of participatory research and gender analysis. 2.i. aims to track case histories of successful commercial enterprises and synthesize lessons for supporting other women entrepreneurs, in the frame of diversification of agro-based livelihoods. 2.ii. explores how a more effective match can be made between what the formal system offers, and existing seed value chains. 2.iiii. draws on the PRGA's experience of multi-stakeholder participation in order to

match soil mosaics, farmers' seed preferences and seed supply systems. Previous work on 'recommendation domains' and 'socio-ecological niches' lay the groundwork; spatial analysis (including GIS and imaging systems, and extending to participatory soil management) offer complementary capacity. The expanding coverage and availability of mobile telephony may offer new opportunities for integration.

Funding possibilities:

i. Further discussion necessary with FARA, ASERECA, CORAF, SADDCC; CIAT; ICRISAT; WARDA; CIMMYT.

ii. The Clinton Foundation, the Volkswagen Foundation, and the African Women's Development Fund may be approached.

Theme 3: Re-framing Effective Action

Fundamental research in this area provides the theoretical underpinning of the new program. A preliminary position paper has been prepared outlining the theoretical ground. It addresses the unease noted in a series of recent reports from civil society, multilateral agencies, and bilateral assistance agencies that suggest the MDGs (800m hungry, or 1.2 m income poor) might not be met unless there is a better understanding of processes of change, that could lead to more effective development action. The IPCC 2007 assessment indicates some urgency in that climate change by 2020 already may increase the number of poor people to 2bn. The recent interest in 'innovation processes' tends to accept uncritically the role of technology as the main driver of change, and self-interested economic motivations, thereby ignoring the extensive ethnographic, sociological, and economic literature that demonstrate more complex, multi-source change processes. The main activities relating to this theme encompass:

i. Learning lessons from 'successful' actions (building on ongoing work)

ii. Feeding the lessons back into practice.

Funding possibilities:

i. IFAD has expressed interest in funding a mid-2007 workshop designed around 3.i. as a lead-in to its own work on innovation processes. IFAD plans a regional workshop for its West African partners at end 2007 on this theme, and is interested in the participation of the PRGA's ASERCA partners in this. This proposed collaboration could be the basis of future joint fund-raising.

Gender Mainstreaming
The five components are:

i. An annual Gender Research Prize, to stimulate gender research within CG Center programs.

ii. Policy Briefs, sharing the main lessons from the SW-PRGA and its partners' work

iii. Development of short Manuals on PR and Gender research for key research areas within CG Centers' research portfolios.

iv. Taking stock: carrying out a re-inventory of (a) CG gender research and lessons that can be learned from this; (b) exploring the impact on the research agenda of women scientists in the CG centers.

v. Building advanced capacity within the host center by (a) supporting CIAT to establish appropriate gender indicators in project review procedures and research evaluations; (b) together with staff with PR & G research capacity, mentoring one of the new Product lines on incorporating PR and gender research in their work.

Funding possibilities:

i. The regional Development Banks might support this. Anne-Marie Isaac has indicated the willingness of the Science Council to support any funding application under this head.

ii. and iii. The existing PRGA program funds/staff could develop prototypes of these on the basis of existing program outputs. Printing and distribution costs would need additional funding.

iv. This activity would need new funding. One possibility is a cost-sharing arrangement, supported by the Science Council, under which selected CG centers requested the PRGA to carry out such an inventory.

v. This does not require major funding and could be initiated in a process of negotiation between the PRGA and CIAT.

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Ruben G. Echeverria
Executive Director
Science Council of the CGIAR
c/o FAO, SDDC, Room C-628
Rome, Italy

Dear Ruben:

On behalf our panel, I am happy to attach the final report of the External Review of the Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis (PRGA). We concluded that the PRGA has been and still is relevant to the CGIAR's mandate, and its work is in line with the Science Council's System Research Priorities for 2005-2015.

We hope that our report communicates a sense of excitement about participatory plant breeding which after only about 10 years of work is beginning to pay dividends and fulfill its promise as a vehicle for varietal change for poor households in marginal production environments. Scientific interest in participatory plant breeding is also expanding. Participatory plant breeding scores high marks on international public goods character, and the CGIAR has been a major player in its creation and development. The PRGA has made formidable contributions in research and advocacy to the growth of participatory plant breeding. Participatory plant breeding is of sufficient importance to the CGIAR and its partners that work in this area by itself warrants maintained funding to the PRGA for a prospective Phase III from 2008-2112.

We also found that the PRGA has also acquitted itself well in impact assessment. Over a relatively short span of six years a diverse body of interesting and relevant work is accumulating. Arguably, the Program's record in impact assessment is as good as any other systemwide or ecoregional program and may even rival the level of achievement in some of the Centers.

Our review also confirms two of the most important findings of the 2000 internally commissioned external review: research in NRM lacks focus and the integration of gender analysis into participatory research is inconsistent. Important work has been done on gender mainstreaming in NARS in Africa, Asia, and Latin American during Phase II, but there has been little testing and fine tuning of gender models and typologies that were developed during Phase I. Activity in both research and advocacy in participatory natural resource management has declined significantly over time since the start of the second phase of the Program in 2003. Real resources have declined over time both in budget and in Ph.D-level scientists. We spend considerable time in this report analyzing options to sharpen the focus of NRM and to make gender analysis a more integral part of the Program. We believe that the budgetary decline is reversible, but it is going to take considerable strategic thinking and effort to bring it back up to the real level of 1999-2000.

Most reviews in the CGIAR have slightly different emphases and ours was no exception. We benefited from the desk study on the impact of participatory research that was commissioned by the Science Council. The results of that study were broadly congruent with our impact assessment of the work of the PRGA.

We also focused more on substantive research areas than on process-based themes. The heart of our report is contained in chapters on participatory plant breeding, participatory NRM, gender analysis, and impact assessment.

At the outset of this review, Sirkka Immonen, who provided guidance and coordination for our work, told us that we would never be able to read all the publications that the PRGA had produced since its inception in 1997. As usual, Sirkka was correct, but we did read (however hurriedly) a good sampling of the work of the PRGA.

Also like other reviews, our review was not free of problems. We undertook the review at a vulnerable time when the focus of attention centered on more immediate financial matters.

Also probably like most other reviews, the panel agreed on most things, but did not agree on everything. In those cases, we agreed to disagree while respecting each other's opinion.

Many people assisted us in this review and their help is acknowledged in the report. At this time, I want to thank my fellow panel members, Eva Rathgeber and Baldev Singh Dhillon. I enjoyed working with Eva and Baldev and learned a lot from them. Hopefully, our work will play a role in improving the ability of the PRGA to continue to play an important role in the CGIAR.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas S. Walker

cc: Eva M. Rathgeber
Baldev Singh Dhillon

CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

SCIENCE COUNCIL AND CGIAR SECRETARIAT

First External Review of the Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis

Review Panel:

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Eva M. Rathgeber
Baldev Singh Dhillon

SCIENCE COUNCIL SECRETARIAT

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ANNEXES

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis (PRGA) was the fifth Systemwide Initiative (SWI) approved by TAC in the 1990s. The PRGA Program traces its origin to a six-day international seminar and planning workshop in 1996 with stakeholders from more than 50 institutions (IARCS, NARS, and NGOs). CIAT was designated as the Convening Center and the proposal from the planning workshop was co-sponsored by CIMMYT, ICARDA, and IRRI. The Program began to implement its work plan in April 1997.

Throughout its existence, the PRGA has been guided by its programmatic goal "to improve the ability of the CGIAR system and other collaborating institutions to develop technology which alleviates poverty, improves food security, and protects the environment with greater equity" and its programmatic purpose " to assess and develop methodologies and organizational innovations for gender sensitive participatory research, and operationalize their use in plant breeding, crop and natural resource management."

Over the past decade, the PRGA Program has recorded several noteworthy achievements. The inclusive nature of the Program, resulting in a multiplicity of partners, is one of the hallmarks of the PGRA. About 80 research project partnerships have been conducted. Investment in the PRGA has totaled about US$ 10.6M dollars and about 30 Ph.D. scientist years. Much of these funds have passed through the Program in the form of collaborative partnerships.

The period of analysis for this review was roughly ten years from the inception of the PRGA in 1997 to the present. The review was carried out between September 2006 and February 2007 by a three-member Panel. In October 2006, the Panel participated in a one-week meeting of the Advisory Board (AB) of the PRGA in Entebbe, Uganda, and subsequently visited field sites and NARS in Kenya (KARI) and Rwanda (ISAR) to see the progress of the work on mainstreaming gender analysis and participatory research in ASARECA. This two-week visit was complemented by e-mail and telephone interviews with key informants to generate information for the Panel's report. A literature review, conducted parallel to the program review, on the impact of participatory research, was another building block for this report, which also drew on an internally commissioned external review conducted in 2000.

We begin our report with three introductory sections that describe the work of the review panel, the PRGA program (Chapters 1 and 2), and the achievements of the Program (Chapter 3). The substantive areas of the Program are treated in the next four chapters on participatory plant breeding, participatory natural resource management, gender analysis, and impact assessment. Chapter 8 focuses on the issues of process and governance. In it, interactions with the CGIAR Centers, with the Convening Center, with the PRGA's Advisory Board, with donors, and with the outside world are documented and assessed. The report concludes with a chapter listing 11 recommendations that are accompanied by a justification that sums up our earlier discussion.

In the organization of the report, we try to tell a cohesive story while addressing the 14 terms of reference that have shaped this review. At the end of this summary, we provide a road map where the interested reader can find our responses to specific terms of reference in the report. The report is oriented mainly towards CGIAR Centers and NARS for reasons that are discussed in Chapter 1 and because of the institutional emphasis in our terms of reference.

Impact

The Program has contributed substantially to the development of participatory plant breeding (PPB) that was in its infancy in 1997. In its most complete form, PPB is characterized by eliciting and incorporating information from farmers into decisions on the choice of parents for crossing and by involving farmers in the early stages of selection. Progress in participatory plant breeding is seen in a small but increasingly visible and vibrant conceptual and empirical literature, and in emerging success stories of cultivar adoption. The role of the PRGA Program has ranged from informal and, in some cases, decisive interactions with plant breeders in the CGIAR, to the funding of PPB in NARS, to the convening of PPB thematic workshops, to the elaboration of state of the art reviews. The Program is also to be commended for its responsiveness to stakeholder demands to appoint a plant breeder as coordinator of the PPB working group in 2004. With the selection and active participation of one of the most respected plant breeders in the CGIAR system, the Program is poised to continue to make progress in this area that holds promise to improve the prospects for varietal change for poor people in marginal production regions.

Impact assessment is itself an area of impact and is one of the strengths of the program. Impact assessment in the PRGA significantly exceeds expectations in a systemwide or ecoregional program and rivals the amount and quality of work conducted in some of the better CGIAR Centers (in this area.) Research on impact assessment has benefited from strong collaboration with other social scientists in the convening center and with economists outside the CGIAR.

The literature review confirmed impact in both of these areas. It found that there was good evidence for the impact of participatory plant breeding in the literature and that a major contribution of the PRGA was in providing a conceptual basis for the assessment of the impact of participatory research and gender analysis.

The mainstreaming of gender analysis in NARS is another emerging area of programmatic impact. Thus far, that work has focused on capacity building and advocacy. The focus is now shifting to institutional research.

Effectiveness in performing its core functions

Since its inception, the program has had an effective priority-setting process that has featured widespread stakeholder involvement. Recent budgetary uncertainties have interrupted the undertaking of a much-needed stakeholder workshop to generate information on which priority setting is based.

More chronic problems in performing its core functions relate to participatory natural resource management and to gender analysis. Compared with participatory plant breeding, participatory natural resource management started later, staff turnover has been higher, focus has been difficult to achieve, and relatively little research and capacity building has been carried out on NRM in Phase II (2003-2007). It is clear that the NRM component of the PRGA urgently needs to be re-conceptualized and revitalized to address natural resource management issues from the perspective of participatory research and gender analysis. We analyze the strengths and weaknesses of several options for gaining focus in the NRM area in Chapter 5. Recommendation 3 in Chapter 9 centers on the need to strategize on the role of participatory natural resource management in the Program.

Gender has been seen as a cross cutting theme of the PRGA Program and there have been difficulties with integrating it into all of the Program's work. Lack of performance in this area is predictable because the Program has never had a fully dedicated gender specialist with a strong background in agricultural research. The problem of integrating gender analysis in the PRGA is diagnosed in depth in Chapter 6. Recommendation 4 focuses on ways to make gender analysis a more integral part of the program.

Less than expected levels of cooperation with CGIAR Centers are another consideration that is dampening programmatic performance. In the present budgetary scenario and incentive structure characteristic of the CGIAR, we do not see a viable alternative to improve cooperation unless and until the PRGA finds funds to renew its competitive grants program that was operational from 1999-2001. The problem of non-cooperation is diagnosed in Chapter 8 and is addressed in Recommendation 5.

Efficiency in management and governance

In general, the Program is well-governed and well-managed. The Advisory Board is strong, and the Convening Center has very actively supported the Program particularly in Phase I (1997-2002). Nevertheless, we identified several areas for improvement that are described in Chapter 8; and Recommendations 6 and 10 pertain to management and governance.

Relevance to the CGIAR and possible futures

Surveys of the PRGA show that CGIAR-related research that has a participatory content amounts to tens of millions of dollars annually. Although one can question the results of these surveys and the accuracy of the information, the fact remains that much research is conducted by the CGIAR with a participatory perspective. Improving the way that research is conducted should enhance the efficiency of the CGIAR.

But the somewhat surprising performance of PPB makes a stronger case for maintaining and perhaps even augmenting the investment in the PRGA at this time. Research in participatory plant breeding is of sufficient importance to the CGIAR and its partners that work in this area by itself warrants maintained funding to the PRGA for a prospective Phase III from 2008-2112. Participatory plant breeding is heavily endowed with an international public goods character, and the CGIAR has been a major player in its creation and development.

In a short time span of ten years, results in participatory plant breeding have substantially exceeded expectations. Three plant breeding programs have contributed to the development of PPB. They account for the majority of publications in an expanding peer-reviewed literature and for the majority of emerging success stories in the field. Two of these plant breeding programs are located in the CGIAR, and the third is headed by a plant breeder with extensive working experience in two CG Centers. All three have had close interactions with the PRGA, and one is the coordinator of the plant breeding working group.

In the next five years, prospective practitioners of PPB should have a better appreciation of what works when, where, and why as experience accumulates to allow researchers to approximate an ideal of efficient participatory plant breeding. The experience of sustained PPB in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is slowly expanding from a very small base. More concerted efforts are needed to

replicate and adapt global experience to SSA if the poverty-alleviation potential of PPB is to be attained. In both research and advocacy, the PRGA still has a large role to play.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are discussed in Chapter 9.

Recommendation 1. The PRGA's past performance and its present and future relevance to the Science Council's priorities for the CGIAR warrant its continuation.

Recommendation 2. The PRGA should stay the course and maintain its investment in participatory plant breeding.

Recommendation 3. The PRGA should strategically reconsider its role and program in Participatory Natural Resource Management.

Recommendation 4. The PRGA should accelerate its efforts to introduce gender analysis into the wider CGIAR system.

Recommendation 5. The PRGA should renew its search for the funding of a competitive grants' initiative to elicit greater cooperation from its partners particularly those in the CGIAR.

Recommendation 6. The Convening Center should take steps to promote greater interaction with the PRGA in the areas of financial management, the PRGA Advisory Board, and interdisciplinary research especially with biological scientists.

Recommendation 7. The PRGA should continue to invest in impact assessment with greater emphasis on quantifying the benefits of PPB to different groups in society.

Recommendation 8. We endorse recent PRGA efforts to publish more in peer-reviewed journals, to solicit more graduate student participation in the program, and to allocate more time to research.

Recommendation 9. We encourage the PRGA to publish good practice manuals for biological and social scientists in specialized areas of the programmatic expertise in PR and GA.

Recommendation 10. Management of the Program should become less hands-on and more strategic.

Recommendation 11. The Program should design an effective communications strategy.

TOPICAL 'ROAD MAP' FOR DISCUSSING THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Terms of Reference*	**Relevant Section(s)**
1. Assess the clarity, relevance and appropriateness of the mission and goals of the PRGA Program regarding the CGIAR's goals and mandate.	2.0; 9.0, Rec. 1
2. Assess the mechanisms in place for setting the priorities for reaching PRGA Program's goals, the relevance of the priority themes and the strategies to reach the overall goals of the CGIAR and its partners.	2.0; 4.3; 8.3; 9.0, Rec. 7
3. Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the PRGA Program in implementing its research and research related agenda, specifically, with respect to:	2.0; 3.0; 5.1; 8.5; Table 4; 9.0, Rec. 11
• increasing awareness and consideration of participatory research and gender analysis methods in the relevant areas of research,	6.0
• developing participatory research methodologies for broad application,	5.0
• developing guidelines for gender analysis for broad application,	6.7
• enhancing research organizations' ability to choose from a tool-kit of participatory plant breeding and varietal selection methods and approaches,	4.0; Annex 7
• identifying policy instruments that enhance involvement of users as partners in PRGA in all stages of applied and adaptive research.	4.0
4. Assess the balance between research and advocacy activities in the Program's agenda.	4.0; 5.0; 5.3; 6.1; 6.3; 9.0, Rec. 2
5. Assess the extent to which the Program has contributed to mainstreaming participatory research on one hand and gender analysis on the other hand in the CGIAR and among its partner institutions and the reasons for success or lack of it (focusing on the relevant areas of research included in the PRGA agenda).	3.0; 4.2; 4.5; 5.2 & 5.3; 6.0; 6.3; 9.0, Rec. 4
6. Assess the derived demand for the approaches based on the change in investment and effort in PR and GA research over the life of the Program at the Centers.	8.0; 8.1
7. Evaluate the relevance, quality and achievements in the following areas:	
• methodologies and conceptual frameworks,	3.0; 7.1; 7.6
• publications and other dissemination pathways,	3.0; 8.0; 8.5
• capacity strengthening,	4.3; 7.0; 9.0, Rec. 9
• institutional learning.	6.3
8. Assess the methodologies and frameworks for impact assessment in PRGA for both PR and GA.	7.1; 7.6
9. Assess the effectiveness and the efficiency of the PRGA Program's governance, decision-making, organization, accountability, resource mobilization and allocation, and mode of operation, including internal communication between	2.0; 3.0; 8.1; 8.2; 8.3; 8.4; 8.5 9.0, Recs 3, 5, 6, 7, 10

participating institutions, identification of constraints in implementing the Program and lessons learnt by both the CGIAR and its partner institutions.	
10. Evaluate the effectiveness of CIAT's convening role, including the relation between the Program and CIAT's own research agenda.	2.0; 3,0; 9.0, Rec. 6
11. Assess the need and continuing relevance of the PRGA Program.	9.0, Recs. 1 & 2
12. Review the literature on IA of PR that has been produced by the Program and its partners and others.	3.0; 8.5; 9.0, Rec. 8
13. Assess the extent to which impacts from using PR approaches have been rigorously evaluated by the PRGA Program and its partners.	7.1; 7.6
14. Specify methodological issues to be taken into consideration in assessing the impact of PR research.	7.2; 7.3; 7.4; 7.5; 7.6

* The complete text of all the terms of reference appears in Appendix II