SIAC Program Activities Update (22 Dec 2014)

Prepared by SPIA for the SIAC Project Steering Committee

This progress report provides a brief background and update on SIAC program activities since September 2014 and planned next steps into 2015 and beyond. An earlier SIAC program update (since March 2014) that was prepared for the ISPC 10 meeting held at the University of Copenhagen from 15-17 September 2014 can be found here. Like the previous update, this report is organized around the Objectives spelled out in the SIAC program of work.

Doug Gollin, who chairs SPIA (since July 2012) is ably assisted by two SPIA members: Bob Herdt who joined SPIA in February 2014 and JV Meenakshi who joined SPIA in May 2014. Karen Macours and Erwin Bulte also assist SPIA in their capacity as Research Activity Coordinators. Full-time staff at the ISPC Secretariat in Rome comprise Tim Kelley, James Stevenson, Lakshmi Krishnan and Ira Vater. SPIA partners with a number of academic researchers and institutions including Michigan State University, Virginia Tech, and the World Bank LSMS-ISA team.

SIAC Objective 1: Develop, pilot and verify innovative methods for collection and assembly of diffusion data

Underpinning this objective is the development of a robust set of methods for routinely tracking adoption of CGIAR-related technologies in a cost-effective manner. Such information is a prerequisite for achieving the highest quality assessment of outcomes and impacts. A set of activities will test innovative ways of assessing the adoption of improved varieties of crops, livestock and fish technologies, agronomic and natural resource management interventions, with the goal of eventually embedding protocols derived on these tests into large-scale surveys carried out by others. This objective is managed by Michigan State University. There has been significant progress but also some unfortunate delays and set-backs on Activities 1.1 (new methods for crop germplasm improvement adoption data collection) and 1.2 (new methods for NRM adoption data collection).

Activity 1.1 New methods for crop germplasm improvement adoption data collection

Three DNA fingerprinting experiments, comparing a gold standard of DNA fingerprinting to alternative methods for varietal identification, are in the process of being analysed following data collection in 2013-14. The crop-country combinations are cassava in Ghana, beans in Zambia and maize in Uganda.

Cassava in Ghana study: MSU has prepared a summary table showing the results of different methods tested for varietal identification. Although variety-specific DNA analysis is still outstanding, the emerging results from the available data indicate that: a) there is a large variation in the estimates of adoption of improved varieties derived using different methods tested in this study; b) A large number of farmers are mistakenly identifying varieties as improved varieties when it was not or identifying a variety as traditional when it was in fact improved; and, c) the methods of varietal identification that relied on 'experts' were better than the farmers' elicitation, but not that reliable in identifying varieties by names. At least in the case of cassava in Ghana, this study has demonstrated the unreliability of both farmer and expert elicitation based methods of varietal identification. Thus, estimating the adoption of improved varieties for cassava in a setting similar to Ghana (which is typical of many developing countries in Africa), based on traditional methods is questionable.

Maize in Uganda study: Unfortunately, due to delays in transferring the leaf tissues from the field to the lab and large amounts of compacted leaf material in the tubes, all the samples collected in June 2014 were lost due to mold development. Due to the delays and difficulties experienced during this project, LGC has offered to repeat the work for this project for free of charge. The cost share of the SIAC project for this purchase order with LGC was $40,000 (which is now available towards other activities, including re-doing the sample collection). This offer by LGC to do the analysis without any charge is a huge incentive and discussions are currently underway with NaCRRI and CIMMYT to see if a team can be mobilized to collect the samples from the same farmers visited in June 2014. This will be most likely planned in April 2015 (which is the earliest window of opportunity to collect lead tissues from farmers' fields in Uganda), pending the approval by SPIA/PSC. Data from other methods (A-C) to elicit information from the field to

identify specific varieties have been tabulated and analysed, but in the absence of DNA results we are not able to determine the accuracy of the results of those methods.

Beans in Zambia study: The DNA analysis of the seed samples shipped to LGC has been put on hold because the bean breeder at ZARI has not been able to provide the correct sample identification information. The information that was shared by the ZARI technician does not match with the sample IDs used for testing methods A to D. Without this critical information, doing the DNA analysis will be meaningless. Despite several emails and skype calls, this information has not been provided satisfactorily, nor has the breeder confirmed that the technician in his lab did a poor job in labeling the samples correctly. Various other alternatives have been proposed but so far no response has been received from the ZARI breeder. MSU is in a dilemma as to whether they should still rely on the breeder providing us with the correct information and/or the remaining seeds so the work can be completed at MSU or explore new opportunity to re-do this study in another country. Except for $8,400 expended towards this study so far, budget is still available to do this Activity for another CCC or for beans in another country.[1] Although, in the absence of the DNA analysis, we cannot assess which method of varietal identification is closer to the 'truth', the preliminary results from this study (analysis of Methods A-D) reinforce the importance of doing the DNA analysis to establish the benchmark to be able to test the effectiveness (or non-effectiveness) of other less costly methods. Given the unfortunate situation with the lack of response from the breeder in ZARI, MSU will discuss with SPIA on the next steps toward doing a study on beans in another country or collaborating with CIAT on their planned study in Rwanda (or Uganda).

Activity 1.2 New methods for NRM adoption data collection

Two experiments for new methods for collecting data on NRM adoption are being implemented by IRRI and CIMMYT (hyperspectral signature analysis for tracking adoption of alternative wetting and drying of rice in Gazipur Bangladesh; mobile phone based applications in tracking adoption of improved nutrient management in India). A feasibility study was prepared by ICRISAT on using remote sensing to track improved tank bund management in India. According to interim reports submitted by CIMMYT and IRRI a few months ago, field activities were already initiated. IRRI had requested a three month extension of their project, which was approved by SPIA. After several reminders, ICRISAT submitted a report in October summarizing the results of their activities. Both SPIA and MSU had reviewed that report and feedback was provided to the ICRISAT team. A deadline was given to them to submit their final deliverable (i.e., a revised proposal) by December 31, 2015. MSU is awaiting the annual technical progress report from IRRI and CIMMYT by January 10, 2015.

Activity 1.3 Exploring market-based approaches for tracking adoption

A five-page concept note was received by SPIA from MSU who manages this activity. They propose a study that utilizes local enumerators who live in agricultural communities to complete interviews of farmers using mobile phones or tablet based questionnaires to track adoption of technologies. If viable, this approach could cut per unit survey costs by approximately half. The concept note was discussed briefly by Doug Gollin, Tim Kelley and Mywish Maredia on 22 December and while a question was raised about validation the overall concept has merit. The PSC will be briefed on the plans at their next meeting.

Next steps: Following completion of the analysis of the three field experiments comparing DNA fingerprinting to alternative methods for varietal identification and completion of the two case studies testing innovative protocols for tracking diffusion of NRM technologies, MSU will hold a brainstorming meeting (mid-to-late 2015) to assess results and outcomes and prepare a document on best practice guidance for gathering data on the diffusion of agricultural technologies (Activity 1.4). In addition, MSU will be exploring on a pilot scale new alternatives for

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[1] The unexpended budget for Activity 1.1 as of December 18, 2014 is $187,000 (direct costs) and is available towards re-doing the maize study in Uganda and a bean study in another country.

outsourcing the collection of data on a routine basis (Activity 1.3) that will allow the CGIAR to track adoption of major agricultural technologies in developing countries.

SIAC Objective 2: Institutionalize the collection of the diffusion data needed to conduct critical CGIAR impact evaluations

The objective here is to compile and make available the best information on outcomes that are at least plausibly attributable to CGIAR research outputs, and on a large-scale. This is where a key bench-marking function for the CRPs is most obviously fulfilled by this program. Large gaps in existing adoption databases for genetic improvement technologies (activity 2.1), natural resource management technologies (activity 2.2) and policy-oriented research (activity 2.3) will be filled for priority regions. In addition, under activity 2.4, the World Bank Living Standards Measurement Study-Integrated Surveys of Agriculture (LSMS-ISA) team and the CRPs will work together with NARS partners and statistical agencies to see how some of these processes can best be integrated into existing surveys to reduce cost and increase frequency of data collection.

Activity 2.1: Crop germplasm improvement, filling gaps in adoption estimates.

This activity is focusing on the collection of varietal diffusion data in South and Southeast Asia. As approved by the PSC in the last meeting, Iran has been removed from the workplan of MSU for Activity 2.1. The revised list of CCCs now includes 130 CCCs (see Table 1 in the detailed MSU report). For 3 CCCs (chickpea in Pakistan, and lentil in Bangladesh and Nepal), MSU will work directly with NARS to collect the information. MSU has identified and contracted local NARS partners (NARC in Pakistan and BARI in Bangladesh) to collect information and develop the two datasets by mid-2015 and has contacted NARS partners in Nepal for their assistance in completing this activity for lentil crop. For the work contract to CGIAR Centers, activities have progressed as per the plan. Towards the implementation of this activity, CIMMYT organized a training workshop in August in Nepal for the NARS coordinators. Sushil Pandey and M. Maredia participated as trainer and resource person at this workshop. A similar training workshop was planned by IRRI in September in Laos and by ICRISAT in October in India. Sushil participated in both these training workshops as a trainer and resource person. M. Maredia and T. Kelley participated in the India workshop in October. CIP and CIAT have identified their regional economist who will lead this Activity working closely with the NARS coordinators in each CCC. A representative from CIP was able to participate in the training workshop in India.

Next steps: Currently, the time frame for Centers to submit the two data base is end of June 2015 (for all Centers, except CIP) and October 2015 (for CIP). The end of the year progress report is expected from all the centers by January 10.

Activity 2.2: Natural resource management, filling gaps in adoption estimates.

Since September, SPIA has worked further on cleaning and categorizing the draft database of potential cases. Currently, there is a draft of 123 NRM practice x country combinations that are considered potentially relevant for being the subject of data collection / verification by an independent third party. This set is broken down further as: Crop Management (51 cases); Agroforestry (12); Forest Management (4); Landscape-scale (8); Pest and disease management (21); Water management (27).

Next steps: Prior to consulting with centers / CRPs on this draft matrix, we need to fully document the trail of cases that fell out of this process (usually on the grounds of being very small scale) so that we can anticipate a number of potential challenges from researchers who think that particular cases should be in the set. This work, to document the process undertaken, is currently high priority. We would like to present the proposed process for procurement of a service provider to collect the data on these cases, alongside the consultation draft of the database, to the PSC in January. The consultation phase with Centers / CRPs can run alongside the procurement process, and we would expect an inception workshop with the successful bidders in mid-2015. The contract for data collection will be two years from approximately April 2015 – April 2017.

Activity 2.3: Policy-oriented research (POR) influence claims.

A consultant with expertise in POR outcomes completed the first component of the first phase of this activity – assembling an initial database of POR outcomes drawing on information extracted from earlier CGIAR PMS data files from 2006 through 2010. The initial POR outcome database represents a wealth of information of all types of "outcomes" initially proposed by the Centers and subsequently vetted and culled by the ISPC using external reviewers.

Next steps: The initial POR Outcome Database will be shared with the relevant Centers (those associated with the outcomes reported) to verify that the earlier presented information is still accurate, or to update. The initial POR Outcome Database will in itself represent a useful source of information for CGIAR stakeholders wanting to see in one place a compilation of significant credible POR related outcomes from CGIAR research. The second phase of this study (proposed) would likely consist of building on this database by, for example, searching relevant documents published between 2011-2014 or soliciting directly from the Centers/CRPs. Relevant outcomes that this SIAC Activity would seek to document in the POR Outcomes Database include, among others, agricultural, trade and nutrition/health policies, that can have a large impact on economic incentives in agriculture, as well as modulating the poverty and nutrition impacts of some new technologies. . A series of steps (still to be defined) are envisioned in going from assembling this larger body of yet-to-be submitted CGIAR POR outcomes to a reviewed and verified smaller set of "credible" POR outcomes to add to the initial POR Outcome Database[2].

IFPRI, the PIM CRP and SPIA recently co-sponsored a **Workshop on Best Practice Methods for Assessing the Impact of Policy Oriented Research** at IFPRI HQ in Washington DC. The workshop brought together more than 40 people, including evaluation experts from within CGIAR, the academic community, donors, and developing country policymakers. The workshop format was designed to foster the expression of different perspectives on the current state and prospects of impact assessment of POR. One of the workshop's objectives was to seek agreement on realistic expectations for what can and cannot be achieved in evaluating the impact of different types of policy research, and how best to undertake the work. IFPRI is currently summarizing the key findings of the workshop and will produce a discussion paper in Spring 2015. See these links for a more detailed description of the [purpose](#) and [agenda](#) of the workshop

Activity 2.4: Institutionalising adoption data collection.

SPIA is now in partnership with the World Bank Living Standards Measurement Study – Integrated Surveys of Agriculture (LSMS-ISA) team, through two research associates that SPIA has hired to work in LSMS-ISA countries over the period mid-2014 to mid-2016. These research associates, Frederic Kosmowski (Ethiopia) and John Ilukor (Malawi) are the focal points for all efforts to improve the way that agricultural technologies are uniquely identified in the surveys of 8 Sub-Saharan African countries (Ethiopia, Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso). Both research associates are now well established in their respective places of work, and are in the process of defining their work plans, initially for the period to July 2015 in Ethiopia and Malawi, but by March 2015, they should have mapped out a plan to cover the other six countries between them over the period to end of 2016.

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[2] One possibility envisages Centers and CRPs being invited once a year to submit good examples showing how their research has influenced policy. These would take the form of short case-studies according to a standard format to be developed by SPIA in consultation with the Centers/CRPs. For example, this could comprise a description of the nature of the policy (e.g., a policy was changed or a negative policy change was averted or a new mechanism was set-up for investments), a description of the theory for how the research influenced this policy (e.g., the impact pathway), and description of all the possible sources of evidence that document this influence. SPIA would appoint an independent evaluation individual or team (having expertise in this area) to evaluate the credibility of the case-study reports, giving each a rating in terms of the significance (scale, poverty of the people affected, etc.) and attribution established (credibility of the theory suggested / comprehensiveness of the evidence provided). Highly rigorous evidence of influence is not expected at this stage (more appropriate under SIAC Objective 3 – Impacts) but some level of minimum evidence to establish either credibility would be expected (and needs to be defined). All case-studies above a certain quality rating threshold will be added in the POR Outcomes Database.

MSU is also working in parallel with the same objective with a focus on India, Mozambique, and Zambia. In October, M. Maredia and T. Kelley re-visited Dr. Datta and the DG of ICAR to follow-up on the January meeting and to better understand the role ICAR can or cannot play in working towards institutionalization of adoption data in India. While the leadership of ICAR expressed interest in the overall idea and were supportive of the importance of having access to technology adoption data collected on a regular basis from a representative sample, the main mandate of ICAR is to do agricultural research. They do not have any institutionalized data collection mechanism in place to integrate this idea. For their own need to assess technology adoption they rely on the seed indent data (for varietal technology) or estimates provided on an ad hoc basis by the network of KVKs and extension workers. Maredia and Kelley also visited NCAP (the National Center for Research on Agricultural Policy) and met with the Director and a few research staff. Based on the discussions with NCAP staff, it was decided that pursuing this idea with the Ministry of Agriculture or with NSSO to explore the potential for integrating technology adoption questions in the regularly conducted and nationally representative surveys may be a better option. NCAP offered to help serve as a liaison to build the contacts with the appropriate office and people within these organizations to explore this idea further.

Next steps: Frederic Kosmowski's goal is to generate evidence that might persuade the Ethiopian Central Statistics Agency to change the way they implement these LSMS-ISA surveys:

1) Developing and testing a protocol for identifying sweet potato varieties based on phenotypic characteristics. This will be implemented in an experiment that Frederic is planning in a number of districts in Ethiopia. He will test the protocol against a "check" of using DNA fingerprinting of leaf samples collected from farmers' fields.

2) Developing and testing a protocol for improved data collection on conservation agriculture. Currently, the LSMS-ISA surveys ask farmers if they keep residue on their fields, and may ask them to state a % cover. However, the quality of the data collected using these questions is likely to be low. Frederic will show respondents a set of images showing fields at different of residue cover a) after harvest, and b) prior to planting the following season. In addition, he is looking into the possibility of using drones for estimating residue cover.

3) Minor tweaks to the wording of questions / coding of responses, to allow for data to be collected in a way that allows for technologies to be identified with greater specificity

In Malawi, John Ilukor is focusing on cassava, in the context of a large scale (four districts) methods experiment being coordinated by the LSMS-ISA team. John is focusing on cassava identification methods, against a DNA fingerprinting check, whereas the main thrust of the experiment is on methods for collecting data on the production and harvesting of cassava using diaries and SMS prompts, in comparison with more standard recall-based estimates. John is also exploring with the Malawian Ministry of Agriculture, and the National Statistics Office, the possibility of incorporating leaf sample collection for DNA fingerprinting as part of the routine data collection carried out by extension works and NSO enumerators, respectively. This latter work is particularly important given some uncertainty about the long-term status of the LSMS-ISA panel in Malawi.

Next steps: Maredia is in contact with NCAP and is expecting to receive the following information requested: an inventory of different types of agricultural surveys conducted in India, information on type of survey, sample representativeness, frequency of data collection, organization in-charge of collecting this data, and their contact information. Based on this information, MSU will determine which is the best mechanism to institutionalize technology adoption data, and work with NCAP to explore such possibility. The idea is for NCAP (or ICAR) to play a leadership role in pushing this agenda, with MSU playing a supportive role. Another option that was discussed during this visit but not yet explored by MSU is to work at the state level (in 1-2 states), and see if the Department of Agriculture in a given state is open to this idea of institutionalizing the collection of technology adoption data at least on a pilot stage.

Other countries where MSU is exploring the possibility to integrate technology adoption data are Zambia and Mozambique. In both these countries nationally representative surveys are routinely conducted, and the next rounds of this survey are scheduled in 2015. Questionnaire for these different surveys have been shared with MSU and Maredia is exploring ways to enhance the already existing technology adoption modules or to add new

questions/modules in these instruments to get a better picture of agricultural technology adoption either at the HH or plot-level.

SIAC Objective 3: Assess the full range of impacts from CGIAR research

While work under Objectives 1 and 2 pave the way for future *ex post* impact assessment studies, Objective 3 activities are focused on carrying out a number of impact assessments of CGIAR research and development initiatives along the entire chain of causation - from research investments to the System-Level Outcomes. Since this causal chain is long and complex, SPIA is approaching it from a number of different perspectives: case studies that focus on measuring the impact of CGIAR research on health and nutrition (activity 3.0); long-term large-scale studies of impact for major areas of CGIAR investment (activity 3.1); sets of short-term micro-scale impact studies using experimental and quasi-experimental methods (activity 3.2) to provide evidence on the impact of CGIAR research-derived technologies to adopting households; studies of a number of under-evaluated areas of research (e.g. irrigation and water management; livestock and impact types (activity 3.3); a system-level meta-analysis of *ex post* IA of CGIAR research (activity 3.4).

Activity 3.0: Measuring the impact of CGIAR research on health and nutrition.

The main effort on this activity has been bureaucratic in nature – negotiating the LOAs between FAO and the various universities / CGIAR centers that are the lead institutions for the 5 case studies. The sticking points have been around IP and sub-contracting in the joint proposals. FAO is not very flexible with the language of these instruments, are very risk averse, and see these not as research grants but more as services that the institutions will provide to FAO. Four LoAs (with CIMMYT, CIAT, Innovations for Poverty Action, ILRI) have been signed. The LoA with Columbia University has been subject to multiple rounds of discussion, redrafting and negotiation between FAO and Columbia's legal office. We remain optimistic that this will be resolved and signed in January. Operationally, we are fortunate that there should be no significant knock-on effect of this delay. The development project on establishing drip irrigation systems, that is at the center of the RCT we are funding, has been similarly slow to be finalized. The other 4 LoAs have started work and have provided a brief outline of how they have taken on-board the messages from the Wageningen workshop held in July 2014.

Next steps: All 5 LoAs will have fieldwork taking place in 2015 and we will have mid-term progress reports from all of them in the summer months of 2015. There is the possibility of holding a mid-term workshop, one year on from the inception workshop – this is to be confirmed, based on need and budget availability.

Activity 3.1: Documenting long-term, large scale impacts from CG research

In early September SPIA issued a [call for expressions of interest](#) (EOI) for proposals to document large scale adoption of CGIAR research outcomes.   The basic idea behind this work is to generate studies that credibly document the impacts of successful CGIAR research adopted at scale and over the long term using best available methods. The call describes the aims and the various types of studies (deliberately left fairly open) that might be relevant here. SPIA received 22 EOIs EOIs and invited 9 to submit full adoption + impact study proposals and another 4 to submit adoption-only study proposals by the 16 January deadline.

Next steps: After external review of the 13 proposals (late January), SPIA will consider and make a recommendation to the PSC to fund 3-4 large studies (budget of about $700k) over the next two years, and inform proponents of the decision by mid-February. .

Activity 3.2. Micro-scale impact studies using experimental and quasi-experimental methods

The experimental evaluations call led by Karen Macours has a funding envelope of approx. $900K. In September, 8 full proposals were received and reviewed externally (6 reviewers identified by KM, in addition to a portfolio review by two SPIA members/activity leaders). Based on these and internal reviews by SPIA (KM, DG, TK, JS, LK), two out of

eight proposals (Corral et al., de Janvry et al.) were recommended to the PSC for funding, along with a potentially fundable third (Mobarak) and fourth (Ricker-Gilbert et al.) for discussion and consideration. After a PSC meeting on 10th November, and receiving clarifications from de Janvry and team, two of the proposals (Corral et al. $357,608 and de Janvry et al. $235,176) were approved for funding by the PSC. The second PSC meeting on this call was on 12th November, and a third proposal (Mobarak, $268,609) was approved for funding, with a decision that some of the non-funded proposals (including Ricker-Gilbert) would be invited to the first workshop to provide feedback on research design. The contract with QFD for Corral et al. has been executed, and the SPIA-funded part of the work is set to begin in January 2015. The contracts for de Janvry et al. and Mobarak will be executed in January 2015, with activities funded by SPIA scheduled to begin in May 2015 and July 2015 respectively.

Next steps: In late January/February/early March 2015, the 1st (inception) workshop will be held (located TBD) where the three funded proposals and best of the non-funded proposals will be discussed. There is a possibility of SPIA Secretariat staff visiting some of these project sites at the same time that principal researchers are in the field – this is to be confirmed. We will have progress reports for each of these in 2015: Corral et al. progress report is due October 31 2015; and it is likely that we will have 6-month progress reports from de Janvry et al. and Mobarak in December 2015.

Activity 3.3. Under-evaluated areas of CGIAR research

As an initial step in our work on under-evaluated areas of CGIAR research , SPIA commissioned Doug Merrey, independent consultant, to conduct a critical review of the impact assessment work to-date on irrigation and water management research. Merrey submitted his draft report which was externally reviewed (quite positively) and has now been finalized and submitted to SPIA. This desk study includes IA work done within and outside the CGIAR, and evaluates how comprehensively and effectively these assessments cover the fields. The review focuses on research since 1990. In addition to identifying the strengths and limitations of the existing IAs in irrigation and water management research (in terms of scale effects, rigor of causal relationships, or how close the impact indicators of the studies correspond to the System-Level Outcomes of the reformed CGIAR system), the review identifies the major constraints and limitations (e.g., methodological, data-related, resource-related, etc.) which highlight potential for new work. Some of the proposed new initiatives emphasize targeting intermediate impacts, e.g. estimates of the impact on water-use efficiency, changes in irrigation management policy or simply adoption of research outputs, rather than ultimate, CGIAR system-level outcomes and impacts.

Next steps: With the scoping study on irrigation and water management research impact assessment in the CGIAR completed, SPIA plans to turn its attention to other under-evaluated areas of CG research. Specifically, in the terms of reference for institutions bidding on the large contract for Activity 2.2 (NRM outcome database), SPIA will include the requirement that they identify which of the long-list of outcomes cases are potentially suitable to be the subject of a call for proposals for impact studies of that country x practice combination. This list of best-bet cases, justified with a page or two per case on why this is a potentially important study to fund, would be a deliverable for the third quarter of 2015. Early in the year SPIA is also planning to commission a scoping study to evaluate the assessment of impact of CG research on livestock. These scoping study reports along with the assessments of best-bet outcomes in NRM research in the CGIAR will form the basis for the SIAC Project Steering Committee recommending to the Fund Council Committee on Evaluation and Impact Assessment some specific areas for further IA work under the SIAC program that has good potential for generating large scale, long term economic, social and environmental impacts from under-evaluated CGIAR research.

SIAC Objective 4: Support the development of communities of practice for ex-post impact assessment

The CGIAR will benefit from a structured attempt to support the existing capacity and some emerging collaborations on *ex post* impact assessment. Information-sharing and regular interaction are important in enabling the kinds of dialogue that can raise standards of impact assessment in the CGIAR, as well as ensuring that individuals have the skills that they need to be successful in their work. Activities towards this objective include a small grants program

(activity 4.1); a targeted program of capacity-building using competitive calls for collaborations with advanced research institutes / universities (activity 4.2); conferences and workshops on impact assessment (activity 4.3); support for independently reviewing and publishing quality ratings of impact assessment studies carried out by CRPs and Centers (activity 4.4); maintenance and enhancement of the impact website (http://impact.cgiar.org).

Activity 4.1. Small grants

In 2013, 4 projects were funded through the small grants program (a total of $30k). The program is now closed (decision influenced by FAO's heavy bureaucratic requirements and the need to find savings in SIAC budget). Updates on each project are given below:

- IWMI, electricity and water pump policy in India: evaluation to assess impact of policy change – while IWMI has shared details of the survey and sampling frame for the survey supported by SPIA, analysis of data will only be done next year (2015).
- ILRI, pastoral value chains in Senegal: MSc Fellow to develop social sustainability/environmental sustainability indicators – in 2014, the team tested social sustainability indicators (hiring graduate fellow for the work). 2-page update on project shared with SPIA, in addition to the abstract of the article submitted to a scientific journal.
- CIMMYT, agri. technology package in Malawi and Ethiopia: applying endogenous regression switching model to a panel dataset – CIMMYT has shared the analysis (full report) based on the Ethiopia panel data, but have been delayed in analysing the Malawi dataset because of delays in data entry. The final version of the Malawi paper will be available in March 2015.
- Bioversity, Home Gardens evaluation in Nepal: new approaches to measurement/evaluation of gender impacts – Bioversity completed the testing of qualitative tools and has submitted a 2-page report to SPIA (as well as a full report on the larger IA for any comments/review).

Next steps: Through end of December and early 2015, review reports already shared with SPIA, particularly ones that are a part of a larger epIA and could potentially be submitted to the Quality Rating system. Continue following up (very little time commitment) with IWMI and CIMMYT on the work that is pending, and provide feedback/encourage submission to the Quality Rating system which should be accepting submissions by then.

Activity 4.2. IA capacity building in the CGIAR

Virginia Tech is continuing its work with CIP and CIFOR in strengthening *ex post* IA activities related to planning & prioritizing, data collection protocols, identification of appropriate methods and implementation of specific case studies. Specific activities include: Center workshops, assessment of Center IA needs, identification of pilot IAs, leveraging funding, and various project meetings.

Although the ICRISAT/University of Illinois proposal for strengthening IA capacity in the CGIAR had been prepared by SPIA and ICRISAT and submitted by the Consortium Office (CO) to the BMGF in May, 2014, and approved in July 2014, there was considerable delay in implementation and signing of the LOA while protocols were clarified between the ISPC Secretariat and the CO. These have now been worked out and the LOA is expected to be signed shortly and work commenced.

Activity 4.3. CGIAR Impact Website

The website is up-to-date: publications, events, blog, and SPIA project pages all have been updated with new content.

Next steps: It does not appear that the current version of the publications map is getting that many "hits". Depending on availability of time and other priorities, SPIA Secretariat will identify a vendor who can improve or re-create the map to make it more relevant/attractive. Similarly, the search function for publications could use improvement, specifically keywords for publications require streamlining and updating. We will explore the possibility of hiring an intern to help update the keywords and verify citation data for ~300 publications in the

database. This latter activity might in fact be more important than the former, if the quality rating system functions well and the database of epIAs on the website grows quickly.

Activity 4.4. Quality Rating System for IA studies

SPIA intends to launch an online external review system as a key mechanism for ensuring high quality assessments of impacts by the CGIAR. The system differs from journal reviews (that focus on methodological approaches and innovative research) in that it also focuses on criteria such as scale and link to agricultural research outputs, responding to donor needs. It is not intended to replace journal publications, but is a systematic way of identifying and showcasing (thereby setting an example of) high-quality work to the CGIAR and donors. The idea was presented at the Impact Assessment Focal Point (IAFP) meeting in Minneapolis in July 2014 and received with enthusiasm. This draft document outlines the vision for this system. Since September 2014, a contract with the vendor (Allen Press) has been executed; and based on process flow and meta-data requirement guidelines, Allen Press has launched a testable version of the review system online. TK, JS and LK have completed the introductory training in early December 2014, and provided some feedback.

Next steps: A thorough review of the test version (private website) will be initiated in last week of December 2014 and continue through January 2015. SPIA Chair will also provide comments on the workflow, and consult with SPIA members on the process where necessary. In parallel with or before the system launch (website becomes public), the SPIA Chair (as the Chief Editor) and associate editors will complete training. While we are not certain about the number of submissions (voluntary basis) in 2015, the intention is to strongly encourage CGIAR Centers and CRPs to submit their epIAs for review and star rating.

SIAC Program Management Issues

M & E: Survey of donor demands for impact assessment:

The SPIA Secretariat is conducting a 'Donor Demand for ex post IA' study as a follow-up to its earlier survey conducted in 2004-05.
This study aims to understand:
• How/whether use of epIAs has changed/evolved over time; current perceptions of CGIAR epIAs
• Are/how some of these changes in use/perceptions relate to actions (e.g. publication of impact briefs) taken by SPIA on the issues identified in 2005
• Additional actions required of SPIA, to feed into SPIA strategy. And use this opportunity to solicit feedback from donors on quality ratings of CGIAR epIAs, methodology and parameters proposed
Since September, a draft report (qualitative with data summaries, rather than quantitative given the small number of respondents) has been completed. The report classified the survey questions into various themes and identifies the key emergent messages under each theme. The endnotes to the report identify specific questions and potential topics for a follow-up round. The report has been shared with SPIA member J V Meenakshi for comments, and a potential consultant to conduct follow-up interviews in 2015 has been contacted.

Next steps: Based on review by SPIA Chair and member, finalize the objectives for the next steps and bring the consultant on board to lead this. Work with the consultant to identify potential themes and questions for individual interviews. The consultant will set up follow-up interviews with individual donor representatives in early 2015: it remains to be determined if the consultant will speak to only the sub-set of donors (17 respondents) who (partially or fully) responded to the online survey, or reach out to all 36 target respondents (donors to the CGIAR and key stakeholders). It might also be prudent to piggyback on the first Fund Council meeting in 2015 to speak to the donors as a group, seeking their collective reaction to key messages from online and interview rounds.

Donor Support for SIAC:

IFAD had initially been quite keen on providing support to the SIAC program. After a long and rather protracted 18-month process of proposal submissions and internal IFAD quality assurance reviews, SPIA was informed recently that the request for funding ($500k for 2014) to support SIAC Activity 3.1 and 3.3 through IFAD's small grants program had not been approved by the President. Implications: early in 2014, SPIA had readjusted the workplan & budget on the assumption that IFAD funding would not be forthcoming at any point in the SIAC program timeline, so there is no material effect. However, we continued to pursue this IFAD opportunity as the moratorium on small grants was lifted in mid-year and we were encouraged to re-submit our request. If this had come through, we would have been able to support another large-scale, long-term ex post IA (in addition to the 3-4 we are planning to fund) and another ex post IA for an as-yet-unspecified under-evaluated area of CGIAR research.

Project Finance and Administrative Support:

Ira Vater, consultant hired in January 2014 to provide financial and administrative support to the SIAC program completed her contract in early December. In lieu of the outstanding service provided to the program, she has been asked to extend her consultancy with us until March 2015, by which time we hope to have on board a full time regular position SIAC Finance and Administrative Officer. The Secretariat is currently in the middle of the search process for this FAO-approved position.

SIAC mid-term progress review:

SPIA is organizing an internal mid-term review of the SIAC program at a venue just outside of Rome (Castelli Romani) on 27-28 February 2014. This will be a 1 ½ day meeting to review the complete set of activities under the SIAC program – progress to date and future work. Participants include the SIAC Project Steering Committee members and observers, SIAC research coordinators and activity leaders, the SPIA Secretariat, the SPIA/LSMS-ISA research associates, plus selective ISPC members and other key stakeholders, about 20-25 people. This will be followed by a ½ day meeting of SPIA and Secretariat members to discuss SPIA's vision and strategy and a host of operational matters.

Research support for SPIA Chair:

Two MS graduates of Oxford University under short-term contracts with the ISPC Secretariat have recently completed their assignments. They provided research and technical support to the Chair of SPIA under the SIAC program of work. Their primary tasks included:
- Reading and critiquing completed impact studies
- Preparing a literature review on poverty impacts of agricultural research[3]
- Managing routine administrative matters related to impact assessment studies
- Drafting /co-authoring blog posts
- Attending the workshop in Minneapolis (26th July 2014) on poverty impacts of agricultural research, taking notes, and summarizing presentations
- Contributing to the SPIA synthesis and presentation to ISPC at ISPC 10 in Copenhagen
- Assisting in putting in place a quality rating system for impact assessment studies in CGIAR
- Identifying and modifying software to use for the quality rating system

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[3] A paper exploring methods and models for documenting the poverty impacts of agricultural research, drawing on relevant literature, recent case studies and discussions at the poverty impact workshop, is currently under revision by the SPIA Chair and research associate.