

## Collective Action and Innovation in Eastern and Southern Africa: Take Off!

■ CARLOS SERÉ AND DENNIS GARRITY

**W**e had thought that writing our joint article for this newsletter would be easier the second time round. Wrong! In fact, because of the many things going on concurrently in our work to align ILRI and ICRAF services and collective action among all CGIAR Centres in our region since the last issue, we're having a hard time reporting back to you on all of them! We were particularly pleased with the responses to the previous issue from longstanding friends of the CGIAR, who congratulate us all for the many innovations we're now engaged in. We promised to tell you about some governance innovations taking place. Let's start at the 'top'. ICRAF and ILRI are soon going to share two board members. This should help us get the most out of our alignment ambitions right from the highest levels. Dr. Romano Kiome, Permanent Secretary Agriculture, of the Govt. of Kenya - who is very well known and respected in CGIAR circles will soon be joined by Prof. Samir Barua of the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad. Prof. Barua has had a distinguished career in management sciences and has been at the forefront of corporate governance reform in India and elsewhere around the world.

Alignment of corporate services at ICRAF and ILRI continues to gather pace. The next challenge is developing a common human resources strategy that enables both centres to create optimal conditions for staff career and professional development. We take up the specifics of this challenge later this month, at a retreat being held on the subject.


We also have much to report on the increasing momentum for collective action and development of the Regional Plan among CGIAR centres and their sub-regional and NARS partners in eastern and southern Africa. Under the auspices of the Alliance of the CGIAR Centres, the centres submitted a collective statement to the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA), expressing strong support for ASARECA, as it reorganizes itself - a statement much appreciated by ASARECA's board of directors. In March, Nairobi hosted a meeting of TICAD (Tokyo International Conference on African Development) on energy and environment; at the invitation of the Government of Japan, the CGIAR was represented by the CGIAR Alliance, with Dennis Garrity as head of delegation and Ravi Prabhu as the other member. A submission made to the Conference on behalf of all centres - on the importance of

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## The role of the CGIAR in Africa

■ RUDY RABBINGE

**W**orldwide, science and technology have played an important role in the upsurge of agricultural productivity and the improvement of food security. As a result, various green revolutions, with quantum jumps in productivity increases, have occurred in different places around the world in the major food crops of rice, wheat and maize. Such 'revolutions' were witnessed in the 30s and 50s of the last century, in Europe and North America, and in the 70s in Asia and South America. This did not occur in Africa for a multitude of reasons: the absence of really dominating crops (rather we have a broad variety of food crops), highly weathered soils and only limited presence of rich alluvial soils, a lack of investment in agriculture, a brain drain of academics, etc. As a result there was no quantum gain in agricultural productivity.

In its report on realizing the promise and potential of African agriculture, the Inter Academy Council makes it clear that the situation in Africa is complex and that improvement requires changes in various domains. Technology push with and through scientific institutions is, on its own, insufficient to guarantee the realization of the broadly accepted goals that will result in an upsurge of productivity of African agriculture. In the domain of technology and science what is required over and above technology is more collaboration, more context specific advice for the very heterogeneous conditions in Africa, instead of simply making do with generic recommendations. This will require a change in the mode of operation of CG-centres. Such a change is possible, but requires a good enabling environment to have real effect and impact. It is imperative that such a change takes place and that all concerned contribute to making it happen. The collective action envisaged under the CGIAR's Regional Plans is an encouraging step in this direction. 

*Dr. Rabbinge led the Inter Academy Council team and is currently Chair of the CGIAR's Science Council.*



▲ Rudy Rabbinge  
Chair, CGIAR Science  
Council

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The CGIAR Regional Plan for Collective Action in West and Central Africa has released its first newsletter. If you are interested in receiving a copy, please email: [Cyrille Adda on \[c.adda@cgiar.org\]\(mailto:Cyrille.Adda@cgiar.org\)](mailto:Cyrille.Adda@cgiar.org)

# Flagship 4 and the Consortium for Agricultural Research and Rehabilitation in Southern Sudan (CARRSS)

■ KATE LONGLEY

Conflict and natural disaster can no longer be regarded as unique one-off events that temporarily interrupt the path of the long-term poverty alleviation strategies currently promoted by the CGIAR. Instead, they have become regular and recurrent features of the environments in which we work. In Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA), 17 out of the 25 countries within the region have been affected by civil conflict or political instability and drought and/or flooding in recent years. Flagship 4 of the Regional Plan for Collective Action aims to address the need for research in highly stressed and unstable systems so that donor money spent on agricultural interventions in these systems is more appropriate and leads to greater impact than at present.

Box 1 outlines the proposed outputs of Flagship 4. It is planned that research work will be undertaken in a number of countries in Eastern and Southern Africa affected by conflict, natural disaster and other types of stress. Initially, the work will focus on Southern Sudan, with funding likely to be provided through the 'Support to Agriculture and Forestry Development Programme', funded by the World Bank through the Multi-Donor Trust Fund. Research inputs to this programme will be undertaken by the Consortium for Agricultural Research and Rehabilitation in Southern Sudan (CARRSS) and its partners. CARRSS is composed of all 15 International Agricultural Research Centres, plus the International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology

(ICIPE) and the World Vegetable Centre (AVRDC) - and is coordinated by ICRISAT-Nairobi. CARRSS will provide the Government of South Sudan with the research inputs necessary to realize its vision of a sustainable market-driven agricultural economy in South Sudan. This represents an important opportunity to CG centres to undertake research and contribute to rebuilding a nation. 🌱

(Contact Kate Longley, [k.longley@cgiar.org](mailto:k.longley@cgiar.org))

## Flagship 4: Improving impact of emergency response on agricultural livelihoods in highly stressed and unstable systems

### Outputs

- i. Diagnostic and analytical tools to enhance understanding of impacts of stress on agricultural production systems (crops, livestock, forestry and fisheries) in highly stressed and unstable systems
- ii. Analysis of the impact of aid on stressed systems
- iii. Systems for knowledge and technology dissemination in highly stressed and unstable systems
- iv. Institutional models appropriate in fragile states designed
- v. Shaping and sequencing the responses during emergency, post-emergency and recovery phases and identifying appropriate institutional models

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research and the major contribution the CGIAR can make on the subject of reversing environmental degradation and on bio-energy, was well received by participants. Next month, in June, many centres will be attending the annual general meeting of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), to be held in Johannesburg. CGIAR centres have agreed to share a single exhibit booth to showcase ways in which the CGIAR is strongly supporting African agriculture for African development.

The Regional Plan for Collective Action in Eastern and Southern Africa continues to develop with support from scientists from all CGIAR centres. Staff from the centres and their partners are now setting up activities that will be conducted in four flagship programs. These have been developed to add value to ongoing research in the region. Recently, members of the CGIAR Alliance Executive - formed in October 2004 to facilitate collective action among the centres - met in Rome to review progress on the Regional Plans for Africa, and were unanimous in their support of the Plans and the way they were being developed. The Regional Plan in ESA has stimulated the interest of many donors, and working groups are busy putting together proposals for research projects under the four flagship programs. The Regional Plan was also the subject of an afternoon's discussion with a European Commission review team in Nairobi in April, during which the EC team said it appreciated the uniqueness of this type of collective action in the CGIAR, noting that this is the only form of collective action among the CGIAR centres targeting the development priorities of the two regions of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Later in May, the Executive Council of the CGIAR will review progress on its two Regional Plans for Africa and alignment of corporate services between ICRAF and ILRI. With all the collaborative work recently undertaken, we approach this ExCo meeting with confidence. For that we have to thank all of you in eastern and southern Africa who have so readily embraced the goals of collective action and alignment. Until the next time then (and with no more illusions that writing this column is going to get any easier!) 🌱

(Contact Ravi Prabhu, [r.prabhu@cgiar.org](mailto:r.prabhu@cgiar.org))



## The ILRI ICRAF Corporate Services Group

*The group working on alignment of Corporate Services in ILRI and ICRAF met on Thursday, 16th April. For a report on progress made in the alignment of CS, see Page 4:*

**1st Row, L-R:** Isaac Muganda, James Magonda, Joyce Chege, Pauline Kamau, Catherine Macharia and Jan Laarman

**2nd Row, L-R:** Veronica Waiyaki, Nancy Ntinu and Judy Ngugi

**3rd Row, L-R:** Andrew Ngige, Daniel Mwangangi, John Nga'ati, Laksiri Abeysekera and Brigitte Laude

**4th Row:** Anthony Pepela, Chris Hinson, Jimmy Kiio, Wenceslaus Kioko and Pauline Ahero

# Teaching and training resources from the ICRAF-ILRI Research Methods Group

## ■ WIM BUYSSE

The ICRAF-ILRI Research Methods Group (RMG) is a great example, I think, of how alignment is working to deliver the knowledge and impact of not only both Centers, but also of NARs and universities. Recently we hosted over 40 invitees from Kenyan universities and NARS at our event, "Teaching Biometrics and Research Methods - The Latest Resources", held on 23rd February at the ILRI Nairobi InfoCentre. The event was partly sponsored by VSN Intl., the developers of GenStat.

We and university staff made presentations of the latest resources developed - by ICRAF and ILRI, in collaborations with their partners - in

Africa for teaching and training in biometrics and research methods, and discussed the use of these resources in current and future training courses, gaps remaining and future collaboration with universities and NARS.



▲ Nicholas Ndiwa (of the ILRI-ICRAF RMG) presents the "Biometrics and Research Methods Teaching Resource" CD to participants.

On 7 and 8 May, the RMG is hosting a regional planning meeting/proposal development workshop that will further operationalize these ideas, with partners such as RUFORUM (Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture), ASARECA (Association for Strengthening Agricultural research in Eastern and Central Africa), ACTS (African Centre for Technology Studies) and ANAFE (African Network for Agroforestry Education).

If you are interested in knowing more about the above workshop, contact Wim Buysse ([w.buysse@cgiar.org](mailto:w.buysse@cgiar.org)). To find out more about the resources presented during the February event please contact Agnes Odanga ([a.m.odanga@cgiar.org](mailto:a.m.odanga@cgiar.org)) or click on <http://www.worldagroforestry.org/RMG>.



(Contact Wim Buysse, [w.buysse@cgiar.org](mailto:w.buysse@cgiar.org))

## The tale of "RMG and the Annual Planning Meetings"

### ■ RIC COE

Both ICRAF and ILRI held their annual planning and review meetings during March 2007. As a joint unit, supporting science across these Centres, the Research Methods Group (RMG) attended and contributed to both. Bringing to the meetings our unique perspective of both centres allowed us to achieve three things: make strategic inputs to projects, further the alignment of ILRI and ICRAF through linking and learning across the centres and projects and raise the profile of RMG.

One of the toughest current 'hot topics' facing both ICRAF and ILRI scientists is how to embed research in development projects, so that they reach multiple objectives of generating local development outcomes and valid research results and IPGs; we have been working with specific projects including ILRI's IPMS project (Improving Productivity and Marketing Success, Ethiopia) and ICRAF's MAFSP (Malawi Agroforestry Food Security Programme) in this area. This issue is not only a concern for individual projects - the management of both centres are currently developing a clear conceptual framework for what it means to do research in this way. The RMG is now working closely with ILRI's Innovation Works and has submitted a funding proposal with ICRAF's Land and People Theme to develop methods for this type of research. The forum of the planning and review meetings initiated and encouraged these links with projects and Themes.

Although spending two weeks in quick succession on planning is a little wearing, it allows us to observe the similarities and differences between two centres, and learn some good practice from

both. ILRI's Hard and Soft Talk debates on hot topics seem an excellent way of keeping staff up to date with current controversial issues. ICRAF experimented with two new format sessions, both of which proved valuable; the Proposal Corner allowed scientists to get peer reactions to new ideas for research projects, and the Publications Laboratory examined some of the bottlenecks scientists face in publishing - and planned actions to overcome them. We think that both centres would benefit from including this variety of sessions in their review and planning meetings.

Scientists in ILRI and ICRAF are now well aware of the RMG and its activities, and we are receiving requests for inputs from all ILRI and ICRAF themes. The new RMG brochure (shown on the right), given out at the meetings, describes who we are and what we can contribute.

Information can also be found on our website, <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/rmg>.

(Contact Ric Coe, [r.coe@cgiar.org](mailto:r.coe@cgiar.org))

▶ Hard Talk at ILRI AGM on "Further globalisation of ILRI"  
- Moderator: Brian Perry (L),  
Discussants: Carlos Sere (R) & John McDermott (C)



**ILRI**  
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR  
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WORLD AGROFORESTRY CENTRE

**Research Methods Group**

The ILRI-ICRAF Research Methods Group (RMG) provides project level support in research design, data management, analysis and reporting, and Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

This support is available to staff and students at ICRAF and ILRI, and their research partners within the East and Southern Africa (ESA) region and globally.

The group is also responsible for, and committed to, providing institutional level support, advice and monitoring of research quality systems.

We are a jointly funded, self-managing unit comprising specialist research methods staff from ILRI and ICRAF.

Duties and activities of individual staff are determined by needs and competencies, rather than by institution.

We are planning to include other CGIAR institutions and partners in the future.

[www.ilri.org/rmg](http://www.ilri.org/rmg) [www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/rmg](http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/rmg)

## Progress in the Alignment of non-IT corporate services

■ BRIGITTE LAUDE &  
JAN LAARMAN

**a**s we see it, there are seven areas that we need to harmonise or unify as we move ahead with alignment of corporate services, if we leave out ICT (see Ian Moore's excellent report on this below):

1. Strategies
2. Policies
3. Processes
4. Structures
5. Information Systems
6. Services we receive
7. Services we provide

As you can imagine a great many interactions take place daily to share information, help solve problems or seek/provide mutual support as we move ahead together to meet the milestones we have set ourselves for the year in the areas of human resources,

finance, procurement and operations. All this and more goes into what formally constitutes the work that is being undertaken. Following our report in the last issue of this newsletter, our interaction with IRSS (the shared service centre put in place by IWMI and World Fish) has also continued very positively. We are happy to report progress as follows:

### Human Resources:

A workshop for the two senior teams - to lay out the elements of a common HR strategy - is scheduled to take place in late May, or early June. The two HR units have worked on comparing compensation policies and practices, and streamlining and harmonizing the recruitment process. They are also jointly considering new possibilities for the pension fund and the medical insurance scheme for local staff. A draft joint classification system was also designed at the end of 2006 and is being tested in the two institutes. A general practice that is now well established is that a representative from one institute sits in the interview panel of the other for the recruitment of key positions and of positions that would play a role in the alignment process. And all of you will have fond memories, we're sure, of our joint end-of-year party last year!


### Finance:

The Finance Units of both Centres have started work on developing common financial policies. They are now moving ahead to map a number of critical processes as a preliminary step to developing common approaches to delivering services, and as a basis for adopting a common financial information system. They are also about to conduct a joint banking tender, and have made proposals on how the finances of joint units or initiatives would be managed.

### Procurement:

The two institutes have now worked out the details of how their procurement units would work together. A schedule of joint tendering and joint contracting is being finalized. Two joint tenders for security and internet provision are currently under way.

### Operations:

The two institutes worked together on new contracts with hotels in Nairobi and common contracts with the airlines, among other activities. 

(Contact Brigitte Laude, [b.laude@cgiar.org](mailto:b.laude@cgiar.org), or Jan Laarman, [j.laarman@cgiar.org](mailto:j.laarman@cgiar.org))

## Creating a joint Information and Communications Technology Unit for ICRAF / ILRI

■ IAN MOORE

**?** ILRI and ICRAF have decided to implement a joint ICT Unit. This has been in the making for some time - the two Centres have had a joint ICT Manager since January 2001. Since then the Centres have developed a common ICT Strategy, have implemented common policies, procedures and standards, communicated and collaborated more in their activities, and share internet connections. It has been a big help that the CGIAR ICT Managers' community of practice has been strong and implemented a single network with common policies and standards and core applications such as email (Exchange) and communications (IVDN followed by Live Communication Server).

Why do we need a joint Unit? One manager, managing Units at two different Centres is not always the most efficient use of that person's time. If you think the number of meetings you are asked to attend in one organization is too many, try working for two organizations. But more importantly, it is difficult to make the most effective use of available resources; in particular the skills and experience of the staff are confined to work for one Centre.


The joint ICT Unit, going hand-in-hand with a move to function-based teams rather than site-based teams, will make a big difference to the way we operate. Initially we will implement 3 teams: ICT Customer Services consisting of desktop support, liaison groups, user awareness raising and training; ICT Infrastructure including internet connections, internal network, telephone systems, servers, email and other central systems; and ICT Applications to manage systems and process analysis, product selection, project implementation, data ownership and administration of live applications. As ICT gains strategic importance to the Centres, these teams grow or new teams can be created to handle expansion. In a location-based structure, expansion would be much more difficult to manage.

The functional structure provides many more opportunities for staff to specialize across locations. Previously the few numbers in a site team required staff to become generalists to manage all the ICT activities on a campus. By spreading responsibilities across the two Centres there is now enough critical mass for staff to specialize in specific areas of ICT - for example, one person will become the networking specialist managing the external internet connections and the internal network infrastructure. It is expected that this will also improve implementation of common standards and practices.

We also expect the more efficient use of equipment and other physical resources, as processes are put

in place for quicker decision making with clear guidelines on the management of shared resources. An immediate benefit will be the large shared storage capacities at both campuses that will provide for off-site but online backups of critical data.

In the future there are plans to host common applications like the Human Resource Information System and the Finance system on equipment at one location for use by staff of both Centres. The result will be savings in equipment costs and in the management and administration of the systems.

Looking to the future the design of the organizational structure takes into account the many regional and country offices of ILRI and, particularly, ICRAF and can easily be adapted to incorporate ICT support for the CGIAR offices in the East and Southern Region. 

(Contact Ian Moore, [i.moore@cgiar.org](mailto:i.moore@cgiar.org))

### Next issue due on 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2007:

- CGIAR contributions to FARA AGM
- Flagship 2 and plans to examine the contribution of markets to pro-poor growth
- Flagship 4 - News from the Yei meeting
- Corporate services HR retreat

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