

Theme 3: Learning Lessons for Effective Development

“Impact assessment in the PRGA Program significantly exceeds normal expectations from a Systemwide or ecoregional program and rivals the amount and quality of work conducted in some of the better CGIAR Centers (in this area)” (External Review, Feb 2007)

There is a growing groundswell of concern (based on scientific data) that the Millennium Development Goals (reduction to 800 million hungry, or 1.2 million income-poor by 2015) might not be met unless development is more effective. Current, unstoppable climate change may already increase the number of poor people in the world to 2 billion by 2020 (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007). A major factor in making development more effective is better understanding of processes of change. The Program is already involved in a study to learn lessons from ‘positive’ outcomes; this will continue and be expanded, and then the lessons fed back into practice.

Supporting Actions for Gender Mainstreaming

“Work on gender mainstreaming should be continued but with an additional focus on gender mainstreaming within CGIAR institutions” (External Review, Feb 2007)

There is increasing concern that gender issues should become part and parcel of institutions’ culture and work ethics. The Program has already been involved in gender-mainstreaming efforts with eight NARS of East and Southern Africa, NARS and NGOs in South and Southeast Asia, and two CG Centers (CIP and ILRI). In order to promote and accelerate the process of gender-mainstreaming, particularly within the CG System, the PRGA Program will (1) support an annual gender research prize (for the best work coming out of the CG Centers); (2) develop a series of policy briefs to share the main lessons learned to date; (3) develop a series of short manuals on participatory research and gender analysis for key research areas; (4) re-inventory past and ongoing gender research within the CG and draw lessons from it, while also looking at the impact on the research agenda of women scientists; and (5) work with CIAT (as a model) to establish gender indicators for performance evaluation across the board, and mentor one of its research themes (‘product lines’).



Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis for Technology Development and Institutional Innovation



New Strategic Platform (2007)



Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
(CGIAR)

Background

In an ever-changing world, each and every entity must continue to develop and adapt to its external environment and the demands placed upon it. The PRGA Program is no exception. In recent years, the CGIAR has encouraged a gradual approach of learning and change through rolling medium-term plans, but once in a while it is necessary to step back and take a look at the bigger picture—and adjust course appropriately. The first full external review of the Program in 2006–2007 and the upcoming transition from Phase II of the Program to Phase III (2007/2008) afforded just that opportunity.

The new strategy is a synthesis of discussions that have taken place within the Program's Advisory Board over the past few years and the recommendations of the external review panel. (This new strategic platform was agreed in outline at the Advisory Board Meeting in February–March 2007.)

The new strategy comprises three thematic areas, and five supporting actions for mainstreaming gender research. Impact assessment research is built into the strategy as a cross-cutting activity.

Theme 1: Participatory Plant Breeding (PPB)



“Research in PPB is of sufficient importance to the CGIAR and its partners that work in this area by itself warrants maintained funding to the Program for a prospective Phase III” (External Review, Feb 2007)

According to the external review panel, PPB is the flagship of the PRGA Program's first decade of operation. In Phase III, the focus in PPB will be on reducing the risks involved with farming: (1) developing and applying PPB methods to help the poor diversify their livelihoods (diversification spreads risk); (2) increasing the number of varieties of poor people's crops (diversity reduces the risk of complete crop failure); and (3) farmers' rights (making sure that the farmer-breeders get something back from their investments of time and resources).

Theme 2: Institutions in Africa's Seed and Seedling (Planting Material) Revolution

“The inclusive nature of the Program, resulting in a multiplicity of partners, is one of the hallmarks of the PRGA [Program]” (External Review, Feb 2007)

Africa's so-called 'rainbow revolution' is all to do with seed systems. The Program's work in this area will build upon the Phase II project with ASARECA on mainstreaming participatory research and gender analysis in the national programs. We will: (1) look at case histories of successful commercial enterprises and see what can be learned for supporting other women entrepreneurs, with a view to diversifying agro-industry-based livelihoods; (2) explore how varieties developed by the CG and national programs can be integrated into existing seed systems; and (3) develop methods to integrate the diversity of soils (in which the crops grow) and farmers' variety preferences with systems to supply planting materials.

Here the Program will bring to bear its experience of multi-stakeholder participation, 'recommendation domains' and 'socio-ecological niches.' Spatial analysis (including GIS, imaging systems, and participatory soil management) will also be involved. The expanding coverage and availability of mobile (cell) phone networks may offer opportunities for integration.

