



Document No: MTM/96/14
Distribution: General
Date: May 21, 1996

Mid-Term Meeting 1996
May 20 - 24, 1996
Jakarta, Indonesia

The CGIAR Research Agenda: Facing the Poverty Challenge

**Report of the Preparatory Meeting for the Global Forum
on the NARS-CGIAR Partnership Initiative**

Attached is the report from the Preparatory Meeting for the Global Forum on the NARS-CGIAR Partnership Initiative held in Jakarta on May 17 and 18, 1996.

Report of the Preparatory Meeting for the Global Forum on the NARS-CGIAR Partnership Initiative

Introduction

The International Consultation on the NARS Vision of International Agricultural Research convened by IFAD in December 1994, within the framework of the process of renewal of the CGIAR System, produced a Declaration and a series of conclusions and recommendations, emphasizing the need for vigorous follow-up to translate these recommendations into concrete action in order to strengthen NARS-CGIAR partnership. The Lucerne Ministerial-Level Meeting, held in February 1995, urged the CGIAR "to accelerate the process of systematizing participation by NARS of developing countries in setting and implementing the Group's agenda".

A follow-up meeting to "develop an action plan to strengthen NARS-CGIAR partnership" was held on May 21, 1995 in Nairobi to discuss ideas for formulation of an Outline Action Plan (OAP). This Plan was subsequently presented and adopted at ICW95. The Plan called for the establishment or convening of regional fora of NARS leaders. These meetings were deemed necessary to ensure that the broader NARS community had an opportunity to discuss issues of importance in developing stronger NARS-CGIAR partnerships. The outcome of the regional fora provided the basis for holding a meeting of regional organizations of NARS before MTM96 in preparation for a global meeting at ICW96.

The Preparatory Meeting was held in Jakarta, Indonesia from May 17-18, 1996. The purpose of the meeting was to enable the NARS leaders from four (4) regions to share ideas on strengthening the CGIAR's partnership with NARS, building on the outcome of the NARS-led consultative process since the Rome NARS Consultation and in particular, on the outputs of the regional fora meetings held between December 1995 and February 1996. The meeting also provided an opportunity to revisit issues that are relevant to the enhancement of NARS-CGIAR partnership on which a common understanding was reached. The participants also formulated the agenda for the Global NARS meeting to be held during ICW96, with the understanding that the Global Forum would be held at a later stage. NARS leaders from Pan-Africa, West Asia and North Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean; regional representatives to the CGIAR; representatives from the NGOs and private sector; CGIAR donor members, including the group of facilitating agencies (IFAD, World Bank, FAO, EU, ISNAR, Swiss Development Cooperation) and representatives from the Centers, participated in the Preparatory Meeting.

NARS Perspectives from Regional Fora and Conclusions of Fora on NARS-CGIAR Collaboration

The meeting initially focused on the presentation and discussion of the reports of the four regional fora and on interaction with the TAC Chair on the research priority setting process. It was clear from the scope of the work accomplished in all four regions that the NARS community is ready to move from Consultation to Action, as requested by the CGIAR Chair. [Draft reports of the meetings of the regional fora are available for MTM96 at the CGIAR Secretariat. A fuller report of the Preparatory Meeting will also be available before the close of the MTM.]

Highlights of the response of the NARS to the key issues raised in the OAP are as follows:

Global Agricultural Research System	The emerging need for a more efficient global research system with NARS as the cornerstones, to meet present and future challenges, was strongly recognised.
Regional Fora	LAC and Africa regions who already have strong sub-regional organizations (SROs) are setting up consultative mechanisms at the regional level. WANA and the Asia-Pacific regions, which already have regional organizations - AARINENA and APAARI respectively - are in the process of enlarging their memberships and strengthening their mandates.
Broadening NARS	More involvement of the universities, NGOs and private sector is needed starting at the national level and carried through to the regional fora as already initiated in some regions. Broadening also means the inclusion of institutions dealing with forestry, fisheries and natural resource management.
Representation in the CGIAR	The regional/sub-regional organizations can provide instruments for better representation of the NARS (particularly the non-members of the Group) in the CGIAR as they have a regular consultative mechanism not available to the present regional representatives.
Priority Setting	There was general concurrence with and endorsement of the goals of CGIAR by NARS and their fora, recognising that emphasis on increased productivity and production remains a high priority. Greater transparency in TAC's priority setting was welcomed, and NARS agreed with TAC to meet and resolve remaining differences.

Training	All agreed that more training is needed as part of the capacity building effort of the NARS. The CGIAR should provide more training particularly on advanced technologies, together with assistance offered by Universities and the private sector in this sphere. Stronger NARS can help in this area but need some assistance from donors to further develop and strengthen their centers of excellence.
Improved Communication	It was recognised that the growing gap in electronic communications technology between NARS and the IARCs needs to be addressed up-front. This is a key priority not only to speed up consultation but also to gain wider access to new research technologies and data-banks. The assistance offered by donors (IDRC, USAID, CTA) was welcomed.
Research and Development	Technology generation should be carried through to dissemination and adoption in participatory collaboration with farmers and extension. This was an area in which partnership with NGOs could have particular benefit.
Funding of Regional Fora	A mechanism for sustained financial support for the regional fora, already initiated in some regions, needs to be consolidated and implemented.

From Consultation to Action

A suggested agenda for the Global Meeting of NARS at ICW96 was presented for discussion. The next steps in preparation for the October Meeting are as follows:

1. Fora at regional levels will start immediate consultations on their contributions to the first draft of the Operational Framework for NARS-CGIAR partnerships, along the lines outlined in the Annex. This draft should be ready by mid-August 1996.
2. For three to four days during the last part of August 1996, a NARS Steering Committee comprising one or two persons from each region, together with representatives of the facilitating agencies and CG Centres, will meet at IFAD in Rome in order to consolidate the first draft of the Operational Framework to be adopted at ICW96. As an integral part of this Framework, a first set of specific research activities for implementation during 1998-2000, in a partnership mode at regional and sub-regional levels, would be prepared for endorsement at ICW96. It was noted that during initial implementation more impact is likely to be

made by upgrading and strengthening existing collaborative programmes, though this does not preclude initiating new ones.

3. Once formulated by the NARS Steering Committee, the Operational Framework will be referred back to the fora and CGIAR members so that all concerned can review the document before ICW96, during which it will be presented at the NARS Global Meeting.
4. Case studies of best practices of NARS-NARS, NARS-IARCs Consortia and other types of collaboration will be conducted as part of partnership activities during the implementation process.

Concluding Comment

The Chairman closed the meeting by congratulating the regional fora on the excellent progress made by all of them over the past six months. This real achievement by the NARS augured well for improved collaboration through strengthened partnerships in the future. This should result in improved efficiency and impact of research and development activities to the benefit of increasing productivity, alleviating poverty, ensuring food security and better sustaining the natural resource base.

Suggested Agenda for the Proposed Global NARS Meeting ICW 1996.

Title: NARS/CGIAR Partnership: "From Consultation to Action"

The Global NARS Meeting agenda shall include a discussion on each region's proposed action plan, and more substantive discussion on other high priority issues raised at the Preparatory Meeting in Jakarta. The operational framework for each region will comprise a medium term perspective (3 years) and a short term specific action plan (12 - 18 months). For each topic listed below there will be medium term goals and a short term action plan:

A. Continuing Consultative Activities:

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| 1. | Regional/sub-regional fora | Further development of mandates, new protocols |
| 2. | Broadening membership | NARS, Sub-Regional, Regional |
| 3. | Regional representation | Possible revision to present FAO supported system |
| 4. | Priority setting | NARS, Sub-Regional/Regional, TAC levels |
| 5. | Training | Sharing Responsibilities for different types of training between IARCs/ ARIs/NGOs universities/strong NARIs/private sector |
| 6. | Selecting case studies of "best practice" | NARS/NARS, NARS/IARCs, Consortia |
| 7. | Sustainable funding | Methods of trying to secure this |

B. Specific Implementation Activities:

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| 1. | Partnership research programmes | (Feasibility/planning studies) |
| | a) Upgrading ongoing programmes | (Programme implementation) |
| | b) Instituting new programmes | |
| | (Types of Partnership: NARS/NARS; NARS/IARC(s); consortia) | |
| 2. | Improving information technology with donor/ IARC assistance | already offered by some donors |
| 3. | Establishing regional research funds - SACCAR/ LAC already instituting | |
| 4. | Setting up/broadening agricultural/natural resource research councils at NARS level-a long process but time frames are needed. | |
| 5. | Organizing specific seminars workshops on priority items. E.g: Implications of WTO/UR-GATT trade agreements, agricultural policy analysis, information technology, sustainable funding initiatives, partnership with private sector/ NGOs/universities, impact assessment and evaluating research. | |
| 6. | Any other priority activities. | |