SPIA Workplan 2019-2021: Narrative summary

Introduction

This work plan and budget reflects CGIAR's strong commitment to the essential role of credible, objective impact evidence in enabling the System to deliver against the Strategy and Results Framework. The scope of SPIA's work plan is defined by its new TOR and the six-year impact assessment implementation plan, key principles of which are:

- SPIA work complements Center/CRP work to provide a compelling evidence base for system impact
- Due to the nature of CGIAR impact pathways, building an evidence base for impact will require synthesis and triangulation of results from multiple studies using different methods and in different contexts.
- Robust data on adoption of CGIAR innovations at scale are a crucial element of the case for impact.

During 2018, SPIA produced several synthesis documents, conducted an e-consultation, and conducted four feedback events. In addition, SPIA Panel members and secretariat staff participated in many other meetings with impact assessment specialists, other researchers, research managers, and representatives of system entities, the results of which also informed this work plan.

Ex Post Impact Assessment in the Business Plan. Taken together, the three objectives of the workplan contribute to many of the 10 Action Points of the 2019-2021 Business Plan, in particular:

Implement and enhance the current portfolio (Action 1). The results of recent SPIA-supported work are already challenging conventional wisdom and influencing the work of current CRPs and platforms as well as thinking about possible future initiatives[1]. This is happening as a result of SPIA's active engagement and strong convening power across the System and with external partners who bring complementary expertise. This engagement with centers and programs would continue in subsequent business cycles, based on new data and evidence from future studies. Investments in institutionalizing the regular collection of adoption/diffusion at scale, in methods development, and in a portfolio of carefully chosen impact studies will be essential to inform implementation of the CGIAR Strategy to 2030.

Strengthen program performance management (Action 4). SPIA complements and builds on SMO's work on results reporting and performance management. Standards and guidelines developed for impact assessment studies inform results indicators (e.g. for outcome and impact case studies). Rigorous evidence of diffusion of key CGIAR innovations at scale in priority countries validate projections from CRPs. SPIA will also use results of the performance management system as an input to constructing the portfolio of future impact assessment studies. Results of IA studies in turn inform the evaluation and foresight work streams of ISDC.

Collaborate on shared resource mobilization and communication (Action 10). Evidence on past and likely future impact of CGIAR research on SRF/SDG outcomes is an essential element of building and maintaining funder confidence. SPIA's role in generating credible, objective evidence; in strengthening impact assessment in CGIAR centers and programs; and in building awareness across the system of how impact evidence can be interpreted and used will support the effectiveness of resource mobilization efforts.

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[1] For example: building on SPIA results on collection of varietal identification data, SPIA convened a workshop with the Excellence in Breeding Platform in January 2018 to develop guidance on using DNA fingerprinting at scale in household surveys, of clear relevance for the new Breeding initiative; Building on SPIA findings showing unexpectedly low adoption levels of on-farm NRM practices, SPIA convened a workshop at IFPRI in February 2018 attended by researchers from centers and CRPs working on sustainable intensification to discuss implications for future farm-level NRM research; In conjunction with the Science Forum 2018, SPIA held a one day workshop on impact assessment of NRM research at landscape scale with centers/CRPs involved in developing the landscape restoration initiative.

For continuity, the work plan presented here has the same structure as the more detailed proposal that SPIA shared with SIMEC in May 2018:

1. Support CGIAR's strong commitment to embed a culture of impact assessment into the System
2. Expand and deepen evidence of impact of CGIAR research investments on CGIAR SRF outcomes and associated Sustainable Development Goals
3. Improve and institutionalize collection of data on diffusion and use of CGIAR innovations in national data systems designed to track progress on SDGs

Links to the elements of the recently approved TOR are footnoted throughout this document.

The work plan is for three years however it is part of a six-year plan and budget.
At SIMEC's request, two budget scenarios were prepared and presented to the 7th CGIAR System Council Meeting held on 15/16 November 2018[2]. The Meeting Summary of 18 January 2019[3] formalized the decision to endorse the workplan and high budget scenario of SPIA, with the understanding that the System Council's Assurance Oversight Committee would carry out a value-for-money review of the budget. The same Meeting Summary noted that the value for money exercise was completed to the satisfaction of the Assurance Oversight Committee, as communicated to the Secretary of the System Council on 15 December 2018.

Budget overview

SPIA Program Activities	Budget 2019	Budget 2019 - 2021	Budget 2022 - 2024	6yr Budget 2019 - 2024
1. Supporting the impact culture in CGIAR	214,861	1,204,033	1,296,162	2,500,195
2. Expanding and deepening evidence of impacts of CGIAR research on SLOs	561,964	3,908,666	1,998,702	5,907,368
3. Improving and institutionalizing collection of data	1,332,052	3,944,842	2,947,122	6,891,964
Oversight, Management and M&E	9,940	64,820	59,820	124,640
TOTALS	2,118,817	9,122,362	6,301,806	15,424,168

Objective 1: Support CGIAR's strong commitment to embed a culture of impact assessment into the System (3-year Budget: USD 1.2 million)

The IA community in CGIAR includes not only impact assessment specialists but also those who use IA results and who make decisions about investing in generating them. Engaging this broader community is essential to strengthening the impact culture since this is often where the constraints to more and better impact assessments by CGIAR centers and programs lie.

A key element of engaging the broader community is to **develop and share synthesis products and guidance for research managers on understanding and using IA results in program design**[4]. The main synthesis products from the more than 50 component research projects that made up the Strengthening Impact Assessment in the CGIAR program (2013-2017) were largely completed in 2018[5]. In 2019 we start work on the development of a

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[2] Annex 2 of SC7-P_AdvisoryBodies_2019-2021_Wplans-Budgets
[3] Decision SC/M7/DP7 in the 7th CGIAR System Council Meeting Summary
[4] These activities are described in 3.2, especially d, e and g, of the TOR
[5] Key synthesis documents include Herdt, 2017; Bulte, 2018; Gollin, Probst and Brower, 2018; Stevenson, Macours and Gollin, 2018; Stevenson and Vlek, 2018; .

Guidance document. We envision this to be a key document of CGIAR IA and the basis for capacity strengthening for both the broader community and the impact assessment specialists. For the broader community, for example, there will be a section on using and empirically testing components of theories of change[6]. We plan to consult extensively on content and format in 2019, for development and dissemination in 2020. The Guidance will be a living document to which new information and examples are added, however we expect it to be fully available by mid-2020 and being used by CGIAR stakeholders by 2021.

Main outputs 2019
- SPIA strategy aligned to CGIAR's longer-run 2019-2030 work programming[7]
- Elements of IA Guidance document identified
- Synthesis documents (Results across SLOs; DNA Fingerprinting) finalized
- SPIA communication and influence strategy developed[8]
- Communication of results, in the form of presentations, reports or think pieces, to target audiences inside and outside CGIAR (including System Council)
- Plan for an expanded IA Community of Practice (CoP) developed

Main outputs and outcomes by 2021
- Draft guidance available and being used by research managers and IA specialists
- At least three CoP-related events conducted aimed at strengthening IA culture across the system, especially among research managers (who were highlighted the in e-consultation as a key group that needed to be more engaged in IA)
- Greater awareness of CGIAR impacts among key stakeholders

While engaging the broader community is important, we will continue to work closely with the impact assessment focal points of centers and CRPs on **strengthening capacity to conduct rigorous impact assessment**[9]. We will also facilitate early review and support for design of strategic IA studies and review of center/CRP impact assessment strategies. This will contribute to the development of standards, protocols, and related training on impact assessment in CGIAR. While training courses may still be useful on specific topics, the capacity strengthening activities will focus more on supporting pre-docs, PhDs, and postdocs for fellowships, and help facilitate collaborations with eminent IA specialists to ensuring high quality, independent studies.

Main outputs 2019
- Feedback on 20 center/CRP studies and strategies
- Draft standards and protocols
- Plan for fellowships
- Workshop bringing together eminent IA researchers and CGIAR researchers

Main outputs and outcomes by 2021:
- Standards and protocols available and in use
- At least 10 fellowships funded
- At least three match-making events held
- System in place for early feedback on IA study designs

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[6] See 3.2e of SPIA TOR
[7] See 3.1 of SPIA TOR
[8] ISPC developed a communication strategy and updated its website in 2017. This will be adapted for SPIA as per new TOR.
[9] See 3.3 of the TOR

Finally, SPIA proposed to focus on **improving the usefulness and the use of data collected in impact assessment**. This will include developing and supporting use of good practice when data sets are made public (in compliance with CGIAR policies) and supporting integration with initiatives that enable datasets to become Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-useable (FAIR). To enhance use of SPIA data for additional analysis—we would take steps to make the data more widely known and available and offer sub-grants for studies doing further analysis of SPIA data.

Main outputs 2019:
- Guidance for data management and data publication
- Subgrant mechanism set up to enable further analysis of SPIA data

Main outputs and outcomes by 2021:
- Data sets being used
- At least two data events held
- Results of funded studies available

Objective 2: Expand and deepen evidence of impact of CGIAR research investments on CGIAR SRF outcomes and associated Sustainable Development Goals (3-year budget: USD 3.9 million)

While SPIA's goal under Objective 1 is to increase CGIAR center capacity to be the main source of robust impact assessments on CGIAR Research[10], SPIA has a critical role in conducting or commissioning impact assessments to complement center work. Topics will be selected in consultation with key stakeholders in centers, CRPs, and will be aligned to future business plans and to the CGIAR 2030 strategy[11]. These studies would be of three types: Studies documenting long-term, large scale impacts of research on SRF outcomes (**Accountability studies**);Coordinated sets of impact assessments of more recent innovations where results can inform both scaling up strategies and research priority-setting (**Learning-oriented studies**); and studies that pioneer development of new methods for under-evaluated areas, including collection of data on adoption, policy influence and impact assessment (**Methods development**)[12].

Main outputs in 2019:
- Accountability studies: Rolling call for long-term studies launched; two studies funded for implementation and two others identified for further development of both the design and team (including external links)
- Learning-oriented studies: Based on consultations conducted in 2018, issue a call for expressions of interest around key topics; review potential studies; planning workshop(s) conducted
- Methods development: Background analysis conducted, consultations to support prioritization of topics and launch of a call for proposals

Main outputs and outcomes by 2021:
- Full portfolio of studies funded and in progress
- Some intermediate results available on areas prioritized and funded in 2019
- Methods work published and integrated into guidance materials (see Objective 1)

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[10] See 3.3b in Shared Secretariat TOR
[11] See Section 3.2, especially c and f of SPIA TOR
[12] See section 3.2 a and b in TOR and component 3 below

Objective 3: Improve and institutionalize collection of data on diffusion and use of CGIAR innovations in national data systems designed to track progress on SDGs (3-year budget USD 3.9 million)

SPIA has been working to improve the accuracy and efficiency of collection of data on adoption of CGIAR innovations and on key CGIAR outcomes, and to integrate collection of this data into large-scale surveys regularly integrated by national systems. We propose to do this work in a small set of priority countries as proof of concept and to develop a strategy for institutionalization. This area of work at this level of intensity would not form part of SPIA's long-term agenda but is something that it is timely to do now given investment in data collection systems for SDGs and given emerging results about the shortcoming of both methods and scales of past data collection efforts in CGIAR[13]. Central to this work is the ongoing partnership between SPIA and the World Bank Living Standards Measurement (LSMS-ISA) team to strengthen the statistical capacity to capture CGIAR outcomes at a representative scale in key countries.

Key outputs in 2019:
- Complete data collection and carry out DNA fingerprinting analysis of wheat, maize and sorghum data in Ethiopia (with CIMMYT and ICRISAT)
- Test new methods for gathering data on adoption/use of key innovations and related outcomes
- Preparations for national collection another LSMS-ISA country
- Initiate consultations and background analysis for selection of two additional countries
- Initiate consultations on institutionalization strategy

Key outputs and outcomes by 2021:
- Results from two countries available and used
- Results from methods tests available and standards and protocols defined
- Plan for implementation at scale in additional countries (including at least one in Asia) ready to start in 2022, including commitments from national statistical agencies
- Strategy for institutionalization available and key actors in the strategy actively engaged in operationalization

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[13] This work relates to 3.2 of SPIA TOR, especially a and b.