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ILRI Innovation Works Discussion Paper no. 4

Workshop on Rethinking Impact:

Understanding the complexity of poverty and change

March 26–28, 2008, Cali, Colombia

Summary

September 2008

Contents

Abbreviations and acronyms

CDS	Challenge Dialogue System
CG	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIAT	International Center for Tropical Agriculture
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
CIMMYT	International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center
CIP	International Potato Center
CoP	community of practice
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DIIS	Danish Institute of International Studies
Fig.	Figure
FIP	Fodder Innovation Project
GPS	Global Positioning System
IA	impact assessment
IARC	international agricultural research center
ICARDA	International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas
ICT-KM	information and communications technologies and knowledge management
IDRC	International Development Research Centre (Canada)
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IITA	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
ILAC	Institutional Learning and Change Initiative
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
KDB	Kenya Dairy Board
NARS	national agricultural research systems
no.	number
NRM	natural-resource(s) management
OMLC	Outcome Mapping Learning Community
PETRRA	Poverty Elimination Through Rice Research Assistance
PREVAL	Programa para el Fortalecimiento de las Capacidades Regionales en Monitoreo y Evaluación (IFAD)
PRGA Program	Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis for Technology Development and Institutional Innovation
PROINPA	*Fundación PROINPA 'Promoción e Investigación de Productos Andinos'* (Bolivia)
R&D	research and development
RIW	Rethinking Impact Workshop (Workshop on Rethinking Impact: Understanding the Complexity of Poverty and Change)
RNR	renewable natural resources
SPIA	Standing Panel for Impact Assessment (CGIAR)
SPME	Standing Panel for Monitoring and Evaluation (CGIAR)
TBD	to be determined
UPWARD	Users' Perspectives With Agricultural Research and Development (CIP)
vs	versus

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Summary

1 Overview of the Challenge Dialogue System (CDS) process as followed and Workshop agenda

1.1 The Challenge Dialogue System (CDS) process followed for this workshop

Within 3 weeks of the call for papers being released, the workshop organizers decided to engage the Challenge Dialogue System (CDS) of Innovation Expedition Inc. (www.innovationexpedition.com). The CDS is an eight-step process for "improving the organizational and innovative performance of diverse groups," and had been used successfully at ILRI in several complex virtual team challenges. The pre-workshop Challenge Dialogue was sponsored by Emile Frison, Chair of the Executive Alliance of the CGIAR.

The organizers formed a workshop planning team that worked with Keith Jones of Innovation Expedition to develop a 22-page 'Challenge Paper' (Kristjanson *et al.*, 2008a), which was sent to 60 participants in January 2008. The common challenge to be addressed by the group was articulated in the Challenge Paper:

> *To learn from the experiences and empirical findings of a diverse group of colleagues from across the agriculture and natural-resources research and development community about how research approaches and institutions have contributed to sustainable poverty reduction, social inclusion and equity. We are particularly interested in approaches that attempt to address issues of how change comes about and who benefits.*

The purpose of the Challenge Dialogue, background issues and events leading to the Challenge, assumptions driving it, expected outcomes at the end of the dialogue, along with suggested potential action options to be enhanced by Dialogue participants, are all included in the Challenge Paper.

Thirty-eight responses were received to the Challenge Paper covering a wide diversity of views. These responses were made available both in a 'raw' format (Kristjanson *et al.*, 2008b) and as an 'initial synthesis' (Kristjanson *et al.*, 2008c) via the workshop website (www.prgaprogram.org/riw). The responses were used by Keith and the organizing committee to

prepare a 'Workshop Workbook' (Kristjanson *et al.*, 2008d) to guide a proactive workshop. Based on the feedback received, the objective (or Challenge) for the Workshop became

> *To find common ground among a diverse scientific group, working in the broad field of poverty and environmental research, so that a future direction for research for impact approaches can be identified and expressed clearly; a future that would see an improved capability and capacity to support and inform the efforts of those working to reduce poverty in a sustainable and equitable manner.*

The Challenge Paper, Initial Synthesis of Feedback, and Workshop Workbook can all be found on the Workshop website.

Expected outcomes
The 3-day workshop was quite intense, as 58 participants strove toward six major outcomes:

1. Alignment on key elements of a vision and set of principles that encompass a new way of thinking about impact that better reflects the complexity of poverty, social inclusion and equity, and of how change occurs—possibly leading toward some kind of 'Statement of Purpose,' in addition to some 'policy briefs.'
2. Alignment on important strategies-for-development guidelines that will help researchers, research managers, practitioners and partners reach poor communities more effectively with new knowledge—including guidelines addressing needed institutional change.
3. (A) Alignment on strategies and plans that will make the portfolio of existing impact assessment and evaluation methods more accessible and understandable for their most appropriate use by researchers, research managers, practitioners and partners—including identification of 'gaps' where new methods are needed;
   (B) Strategies for institutionalizing methods, principles, guidelines—to work with organizational change and institutions—toward international public goods.
4. Alignment on the nature and form of a network aimed at increasing the exchange and sharing of knowledge and experience for co-learning, facilitating mentoring, increasing collaborative opportunities (joint projects), enabling more collective action, and nurturing communities of practice.
5. Situation analysis—why we want to do something different.
6. Publications and other communication activities.

1.2   Workshop agenda (simplified)

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2008
Welcome from the Workshop Organizers – Patti Kristjanson, Nina Lilja and Jamie Watts

Session 1: Setting the Stage for a Productive, Collaborative Workshop

- The Key Challenge for the Workshop and Rules for the Road
- Expected Outcomes for the Workshop [1]

Session 2: Establishing Context and Affirming the Framework for our Discussions – the Workshop Themes

- Background – reactions to the Challenge Paper
- Assumptions we are making as we move forward
- Reminder of the Workshop Themes and the high-level questions they imply

Session 3: Case Studies – Lessons Learned and Empirical Evidence of Poverty Reduction (Theme 1) – Keynote Presentations

- **Dickson, Nancy:** Knowledge systems for sustainable development: The effective use of knowledge to support decision-making
- **Bellon, Mauricio:** Maize creolization: Strategic opportunism in research on the impacts of plant breeding
- **Röling, Niels:** Participatory innovation systems analysis: A tool for institutional development?

Session 3 cont'd: Case Studies: Reminder of Feedback from the Challenge Paper and Reflecting on the Keynote Presentations – Table Group Discussions & Reporting

Session 4: Case Studies – Panel

- **Prasad, Shambu:** Learning alliances: Emerging trends in knowledge-intensive agricultural innovation for poverty alleviation
- **Hooton, Nicholas:** Linking evidence and user-voice for pro-poor policy change: Lessons from Uganda and Kenya
- **Becerril, Javier:** Maize adoption and poverty in Mexico
- **Biggs, Stephen & Gurung, Barun:** Innovation as relational practice
- **Campilan, Dindo & Sister, Lorna:** Exploring livelihood outcomes of participatory farmer training: The case of sweet potato feed utilization in Vietnam and The Philippines
- **Prasad, Vishnubhotla (VL) (*et al.*):** Mapping of processes associated with the change: Adoption of hybrid maize in Nalgonda district, Andhra Pradesh, India
- **Vandeplas, Isabelle (*et al.*):** Bridging the gap between farmers and researchers through collaborative experimentation: Cost and labor reduction in soybean production in South-Nyanza, Kenya
- **Facheux, Charly *et al.*:** Comparison of three modes of improving benefits to farmers within agroforestry product market chains

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[1] The expected outcomes agreed in this session are given in section 6 of this Summary.

- **Salahuddin, Ahmad (& Magor, Noel P.):** Research to development process: PETRRA experience

- **Mowo, Jeremias, Opondo, Chris, Nyaki, Adolf (& Admusa, Zanabe):** Addressing the research–development disconnect: Lessons from integrated natural-resource management in Eastern Africa

Session 4 cont'd: Case Studies: Table Group Discussions on Strategies & Guidelines

Session 4 cont'd: Case Studies: Plenary Table Group Reporting and Overall Wrap-up of the Case Study Theme

THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2008

Session 5: Reflection on Day 1 – Theme 1

— Rethink impact and change

— Report on reflection notes from Day 1

Session 6: Impact Assessment and Evaluation Approaches (Theme 2) – Keynote Presentations

- **Horton, Douglas:** Roots and branches of evaluation in international agricultural research

- **Rogers, Patricia** – Four key tasks in impact assessment

- **Avila, Flavio** – Embrapa experience on impact evaluation: Multidimensional approaches and institutional uses

Session 6 cont'd: Impact Assessment and Evaluation Approaches – Table Group Discussion

— Reflect on and discuss keynote messages

Task (LIST) of Gaps and Opportunities and Implications to understanding / rethinking impact and impact assessment and evaluation approaches

Session 6 cont'd: Impact Assessment and Evaluation Approaches – Plenary reporting and discussion of Task

— participants were also invited to note (on a card) any burning issues they felt had yet to be tabled

Session 7: Impact Assessment and Evaluation Approaches – Panel

- **Raitzer, David:** Assessing the impact of CIFOR's influence on policy and practice in the pulp and paper sector

- **O'Reilly, Sheelagh:** How can formal comparative qualitative analysis assist in understanding and explaining differential impacts of pro-poor innovation in the renewable natural resources sector?

- **Douthwaite, Boru, Alvarez, Sophie (*et al.*):** Participatory Impact Pathways Analysis: A practical method for project planning and evaluation

- **(Egelyng, Henrik &) Tipilda, Annita:** Investing for development returns: A review, a theoretical discussion and some cases of milk-men, milk-trees and millions

- **Friis-Hansen, Esbern (& Duveskog, Deborah):** Linking the learning process in Farmer Field Schools to impact of transformative change and poverty reduction
- **Galie', Alessandra:** Assessing women's empowerment through participatory agricultural technology in Syria
- **Pant, Laxmi Prasad (& Odame, Helen Hambly):** Assessing social innovations in agricultural research and development partnerships
- **Rotondo, Emma (*et al.*):** Evaluation of outcomes and impacts of participatory methodologies on the quality of life of Andean households in Bolivia, Colombia and Peru
- **Thomas, Kurian:** Rights and responsible well-being dimensions of development: Capturing change and impact
- **Hellin, Jonathan:** Livelihood metrics and knowledge bases for *ex-ante* impact assessment in the rice–wheat farming system of South Asia
- **La Rovere, Roberto:** Through the livelihoods lens: Lessons from Mexico and Nepal on integrating livelihood approaches and metrics for impact assessment
- **Beardon, Hannah (*et al.*):** Recognizing complex social dynamics in natural-resource management in Colombia

Session 7 cont'd: Impact Assessment and Evaluation Approaches – Table Groups

Task: Identify priority gaps and opportunities—especially those that can be acted on (may include new)

Session 7 cont'd: Impact Assessment and Evaluation Approaches – Plenary

FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2008

Session 8: Reflections on Day 2 – Nancy Dickson

Session 9: Institutionalization of New Approaches for Research Management and Impact Assessment (Theme 3) – Keynote Presentations

- **Pachico, Douglas:** Reflections on a case study of institutionalization at CIAT
- **Rijniers, Jeroen (presented by Jamie Watts):** 'Touching from a distance' – A donor's perspective on impact assessment
- **Wind, Tricia:** Building a culture of evaluation at IDRC

Session 9 cont'd: Institutionalization – Plenary

Session 10: Institutionalization of New Approaches – Panel Presentations

- **Gandarillas, Edson:** Institutional arrangements to improve the responsiveness of agricultural innovation systems to the needs of the poor: An investigation of participatory monitoring and evaluation in Bolivia
- **Guijt, Irene:** Rethinking monitoring for concerted action: Dealing with the complexities of a 'messy partnership' in Brazil

- **Maxwell Mudhara (*et al.*):** Learning to find ways to increase farmer access to innovation resources: Monitoring and evaluation of Local Innovation Support Funds
- **La Rovere, Roberto & Dixon, John:** The process of developing an impact culture at CIMMYT and enriching impact assessment
- **Opondo, Chris, Mowo, Jeremias, Nyaki, Adolf (*et al.*):** Institutional innovations for enhancing impact of research in Eastern Africa Highlights
- **Njenga, Mary (*et al.*):** Enhancing research impacts through mainstreaming gender in organizations and research processes: Case study of Urban Harvest and the International Potato Center
- **Nyangaga, Julius (*et al.*):** Research beyond borders: Five cases of ILRI research outputs contributing to outcomes
- **Sheriff, Natasja:** Monitoring for change, assessing for impact: The WorldFish Center experience

Session 10 cont'd: Institutionalization – Plenary Discussion

— with reference to actions:

(a) have any new ones surfaced?

(b) what (institutional) lessons are there?

Session 11: Action Planning I – Self-selected Table Groups

- **Principles & standards**
- **Networking & community of practice**
- **Methodologies guidelines (including 'soft')**
- **Institutionalization**
- ***Ex-ante* impact assessment, priority-setting & planning**

Session 11 cont'd: Action Planning II – Self-selected Table Groups

- **Organizing framework**
- **Capacity-building**
- **Communications**
- **Histories and political economy of agricultural and natural resources science and technology**

Session 11 cont'd: Action Planning – Gallery reporting of Action Plans

Workshop Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Workshop Closure – Douglas Pachico

2   Profile of the participants (summary)

2.1   Gender

The Workshop was attended by 59 professionals (including 3 workshop reporters and a facilitator), 42% (25) of whom were women.

2.2   Organizational affiliation (by CG Center and by non-CG organization types)

Thirty-two (54%) of participants were affiliated with the CGIAR, representing 11 Centers and 3 inter-Center/Systemwide entities:

CGIAR Centers	• Bioversity International
	• CIFOR
	• CIAT
	• CIMMYT
	• CIP
	• ICARDA
	• IITA
	• ILRI
	• IRRI
	• World Agroforestry Centre
	• WorldFish Center
CGIAR Systemwide and Ecoregional Programs (SWEPs) and other Inter-Center Initiatives	• Participatory Research and Gender Analysis (PRGA)
	• African Highlands Initiative
	• Institutional Learning and Change (ILAC)

Twenty-seven (46%) were non-CGIAR (e.g. NGOs, universities, advisors, and donor organizations):

Type of institution (percentage) [2]	Names of institutions represented
Universities (**18%**)	• Christian Albrechs Universität zu Kiel, Germany • Harvard University, USA • University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa • University of East Anglia, UK

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[2] Percentage of the overall affiliations (CGIAR and non-CGIAR).

	• University of Guelph, Canada
	• Wageningen University and Research Center, The Netherlands
	• Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia
	• Xavier Institute of Management, India
	• Institutional University Cooperation, Belgium
Research and development institutes **(7%)**	• Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), Denmark
	• PROINPA Foundation, Bolivia
	• PREVAL, Peru
NGOs **(7%)**	• Wildlife Foundation, Kenya
	• Oxfam, Hong Kong
	• WWF, Colombia
National agricultural research institutes **(5%)**	• Embrapa, Brazil
	• Mlingano Agricultural Research Institute, Tanzania
Donor **(2%)**	• IDRC, Canada
Government organization **(2%)**	• Kenya Dairy Board (KDB)
International consultants **(5%)**	
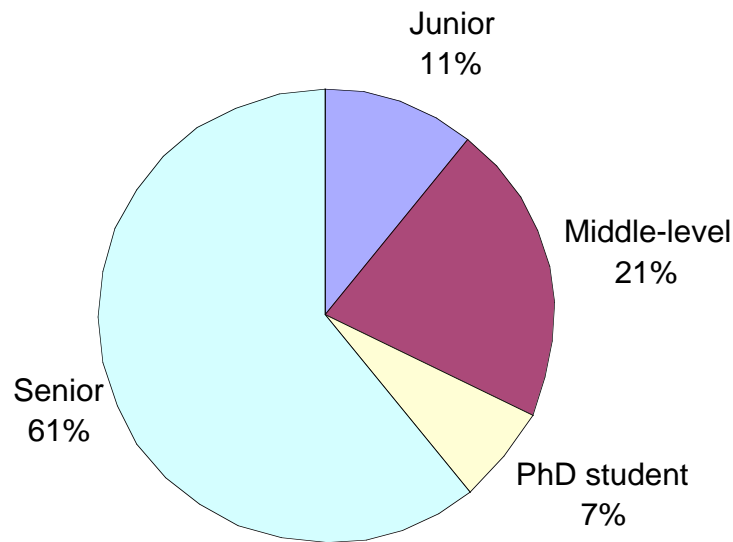
Figure 1: Seniority of participants—how experienced were they?

Junior
11%

Middle-level
21%

PhD student
7%

Senior
61%
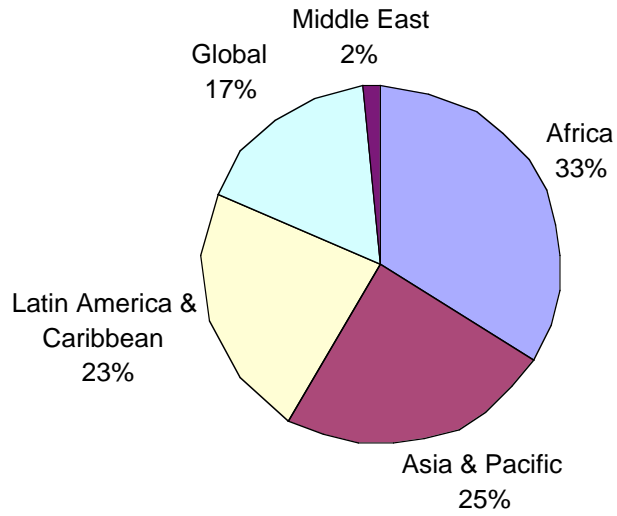
Figure 2: Regional affiliation of participants—where they were working.
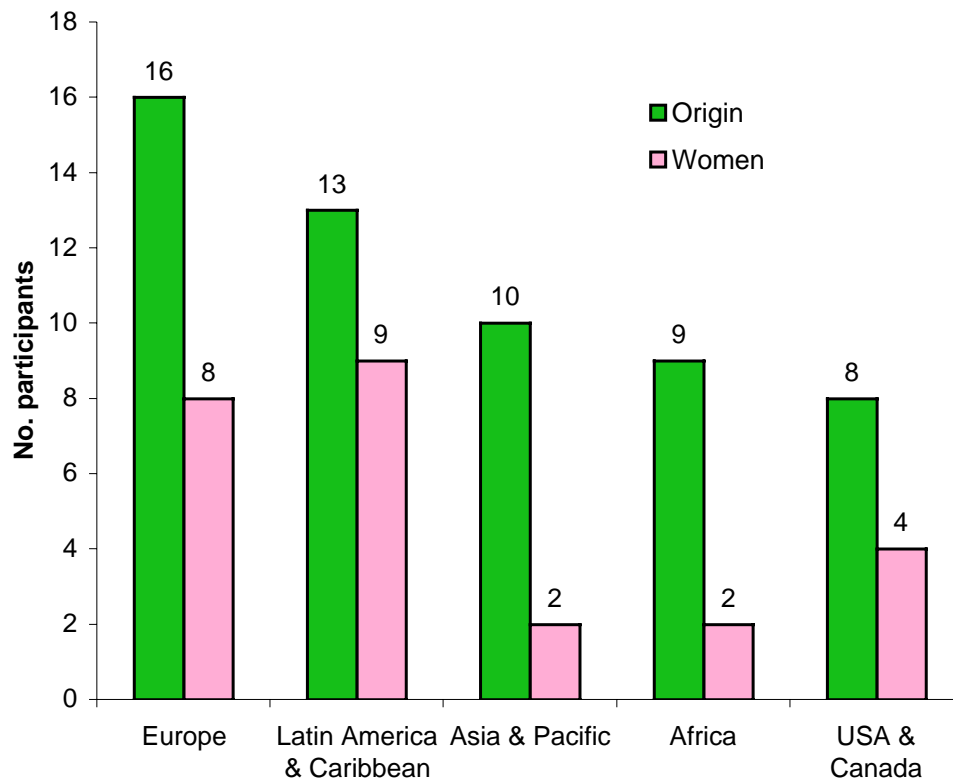
Figure 3: Geographic origin of participants.
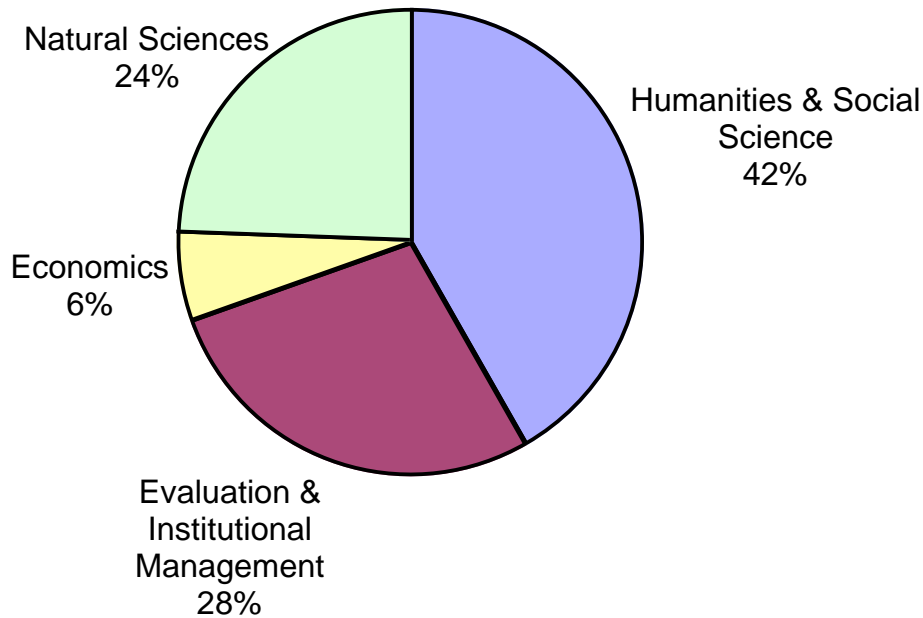
Figure 4: Disciplinary affiliation of participants.

Natural Science: agriculture, natural-resources management, animal health, ecology, and livestock
Evaluation & Institutional Management: evaluation, impact assessment, management, and institutional change
Economics: agricultural economics and economics
Humanities & Social Science: development studies, gender, training, participatory research, and sociology.

3   Key messages

Four key messages seemed to arise from the workshop:

■ *'Rethinking impact' refers to rethinking how we do research to have sustainable poverty impacts and link knowledge with action, along with how best to evaluate that*

How we do the research is key to achieving pro-poor, gender-sensitive and socially inclusive results. Working more thoughtfully with, and helping to bridge boundaries between, strategically chosen partners can help increase the probability of linking the knowledge generated by the research to actions that lead to sustainable poverty reductions.

■ *Bring other (existing) evaluation methods and approaches into more regular practice*
A wide array of evaluation methods and approaches already exists that is not fully utilized by the agricultural and natural-resource management (NRM) R&D community. The participants should review the available options and try out some of the methodologies that they are currently not using.

■ *There seems to be a legitimacy gap in terms of approaches and methods*
There is still a high degree of skepticism among (especially CGIAR) agricultural and NRM researchers about non-economic and non-statistical data being used in evaluations. More empirical evidence of the validity and value of approaches other than economic (e.g. *ex-post* assessments) is an area where we could all add value and help reach a wider audience regarding sustainable poverty-related impacts of research.

■ *Methodology gaps still exist*
Some believe that the CGIAR does not have adequate evaluation methods and approaches for the 75% of its research that is not related to germplasm improvement (e.g. policies, institutions, natural-resource management, gender and social inclusion). The evaluators in the System need to access or devise new methods to fill this important gap.

The key issues discussed at the Workshop are further elaborated in a 2-page *Brief* (ILAC Initiative *et al.*, 2008e) and discussed in detail in Kristjanson *et al.* (2008e).

There was also a considerable amount of alignment around the following ideas:
• The need for this group to develop a conceptual or organizational framework to capture the complex challenge we all face.
• The experience and knowledge of the workshop participants brings together a wealth of lessons as to ways in which we can increase the probability of linking knowledge with action to help sustainably reduce poverty.
• Starting with this group to build some kind of a coalition or community of practice would be a good idea, as it would give us a stronger collective voice with which to share our knowledge.
• This group can contribute (and this workshop has already contributed) toward capacity-building with respect to a broad range of skills, tools and institutional-change-supporting efforts to have an impact in terms of sustainable poverty reduction.
• The importance of strategic communication is often not recognized, both in terms of having greater impact with our research-for-development efforts, and in evaluating those impacts.

4   Action plans

Action-planning was an integral part of the CDS process originally proposed for this workshop. Even when the agendas were reworked for days 2 and 3, action-planning was still considered a valuable element for moving participants toward concrete action. In the end, two sessions on the final afternoon were set aside for participants to join groups to discuss specific action points of interest. Thus, the action-planning 'teams' were self-selected, and each participant had the opportunity to contribute to two such groups.

The nine groups were: Principles and standards; Networking and community of practice; Methodologies guidelines (including 'soft'); Institutionalization; *Ex-ante* impact assessment, priority-setting and planning; Organizing framework; Capacity-building; Communications; and, Histories and political economy of agricultural and natural resources science and technology. For the most part, the text of this section is presented as it was written on the charts at the workshop. Some of the actions to which participants committed themselves are included in a *Brief* (ILAC Initiative *et al*., 2008g), and again as part of the discussion of the key issues (Kristjanson *et al*., 2008e).

In this section, we have made an attempt to bring the progress on the actions up to date as of September 2008.

4.1   Principles & standards

Team: N Dickson; B Douthwaite; N Hooton; P Kristjanson; E Rotondo; R La Rovere; A Salahuddin

Gaps and Opportunities:
- Toolkits lack principles; linking principles
- Principles for what?
- How to target/reach the poor and incorporate their voice (e.g. the 9 propositions in section 7.1 of the Challenge Paper)
- Shared common purpose; i.e. responses to these propositions were very positive
- Empowerment/equality aspect included

Action	Timeframe
Refine principles or propositions from workshop feedback	May 2008
Identify what strategies are being employed to achieve these principles in a range of empirical studies; drawing from: • This workshop's case studies • Water–Food Challenge Program case studies (that have mapped out impact pathways)	1 year
Draft guidelines paper that links principles for linking knowledge with action (either 9 propositions from Challenge Paper, or 5 challenges from N Dickson's presentation) with strategies, approaches, methods to assist with achieving each principle	
Compiling existing methodologies and standards	

4.2   Networking & community of practice

Team: D Aviles; B Gurung; (P Kristjanson); N Lilja; J Nyangaga; VL Prasad; L Sister; (J Watts); (T Wind)

Gaps and Opportunities:
The group discussed: the merits of networks and what leads to good/bad networks; the importance of diversity of views in networks. The *gaps* discussed were with regard to:
• The CG's ways of doing impact—it was felt that the network represented in part by the participants at the workshop could be used to advocate with SPIA by non-CG evaluation experts.

Opportunity:
• Members of the group felt that hosting a space for free exchange of information, ideas and action would be helpful.

Action	Timeframe
Establish listserv (purposes: sharing peer/mentor; review)	*Done*
Listserv contributions / keep alive • Evaluation case/UPWARD for peer / mentor review • Initial inventory of CoPs in evaluation/IA • Link to OMLC (Outcome Mapping Learning Community), FIP (Fodder Innovation Project)	April 15, 2008
Set 'house rules' for listserv	

Action	Timeframe
Find out SPIA/SPME professional evaluators & advocate to broaden IA methods within & outside CG	
Scoping study • Source book on IA/evaluation (this could be in line with CIP-UPWARD's earlier studies on source books)	*To check with the Methodologies action-planning team*
Advocacy to SPIA by non-CG CoP participants at this workshop	
Peer review by external evaluators of 'odd balls' IA/evaluation in the CG Centers & programs to feed into previous action point	

4.3 Methodologies guidelines

Team: I Antezana; J Becerril; C Facheux; E Friis-Hansen; A Galie'; D Horton; M Mudhara; M Njenga; S O'Reilly; P Rogers; K Thomas; I Vandeplas

Gaps and Opportunities:
There is a clear gap in relation to how evaluation thinking (including impact) is undertaken in the CGIAR and other natural-resource-research and research-into-use organizations, programs and institutions. The work being proposed is to examine how approaches to evaluation thinking might be deepened, broadened and institutionalized. The focus will be on how:
  • To improve how evaluation and learning (including impact assessment) is done.
  • To provide a range of credible (useful, feasible, salient, legitimate, etc.) methods for evaluation of the large range of activities that are being undertaken (in relation to renewable natural resources [RNR] research and scale up) and for which current methods do not necessarily capture the experiences of different stakeholders and the range of impacts (direct and indirect) that are found especially when working on livelihood development/poverty reduction where understanding the complexity of the context is critical to success.

Action	Timeframe
• Start collation of tools, examples (evidence of use)	End April 2008
• To prepare and circulate a draft structure for this process and the possible assessment of material to be included in the concept note (next action)	July 2008

Action	Timeframe

• To prepare a draft concept note for circulation to the team regarding the preparation of the critical review and associated documentation "To provide a range of credible (useful, feasible, salient, legitimate, etc.) methods for evaluation of the large range of activities that are being undertaken (in relation to renewable natural resources [RNR] research and scale up) and for which traditional (current?) methods are not so useful"
   o The focus would be on RNR work and would cover the three key areas of the CG focus (germplasm collection, natural-resource management, policy-making and institutional development) but would not be focused only on the CG
   o Would need to address a range of interventions in different contexts
   o Would cover research activities as well as those associated with 'research into use' (e.g. scale up and out) and the explicit/implicit linkages to development, poverty reduction, social exclusion and gender.
	A concept note has been developed for 'Impact Evaluation for Institutional Learning and Change' and DFID-funded Research Into Use Program has funded the scoping study for this work

4.4 Institutionalization

Team: F Avila; D Campilan; E Gandarillas; I Guijt; J Hellin; N Röling

Action	Timeframe
Concept note	*Convergence of Science Programme funded for second phase (€4.5 million)*
Write up discussion — *Institutional conditions that make biological approaches work: the unwelcome view of social science*	*Paper written in response to Royal Society's 'Call for Evidence'*

Action	Timeframe
Institutional framework to enhance synthesis of 9 [?] case studies of capacity development	2 weeks
Note on integration of IA into organization, link with other info. to share	3 months
Share literature review of new institutional economy	3 months

4.5 *Ex-ante* impact assessment, priority-setting & planning

Team: S Alvarez; R Mackay; LP Pant; V Polar; D Raitzer; C Staver; J Watts

Gaps and Opportunities:
- *Opportunity:* The impact potential of public agricultural research for development could be improved if research projects were selected on the basis of explicit analysis of likely benefits to be achieved, with key assumptions underpinning the analysis validated against documented past experience.

However, the following *gaps* remain:
- Systematic approaches are rarely employed to inform research choices
- No real requirement for *ex-ante* assessment for research funding
- Management perceives little need for systematic analysis to inform priorities
- Too much planning and bureaucracy, but too little space and willingness for open discourse over key assumptions exists in many public-sector agencies
- Donors often drive priorities on a political basis

Problem analysis: In absence of systematic analysis, priorities are established by scientific peer incentives, interests of a limited range of stakeholders or individuals and/or short-term funding availability, in a manner which may not include adequate consideration of key assumptions and understanding of indirect impact pathways, or the comparative potential of alternative options. As a result, resources may not be directed toward research with the greatest impact potential, and flawed assumptions may underpin implicit conceptualization of impact pathways, increasing the probability of impact failure. Greater recognition of the potential of explicit *ex-ante* assessment to inform and improve research choices is needed to expand the use of systematic priority-setting methods.

Action	Timeframe
Priority-setting compendium publication	With a year
Virtual forum ICT-KM set up	2–3 months

Action	Timeframe
Possible ILAC Brief on *ex-ante* methods broadly	1 year *—Authors being sought*
Principles of good practice for R&D priority-setting (including examples)	2–3 years
Possible benchmarking survey (or review) of priority-setting processes against principles of good practice	TBD

4.6   Organizing framework

Team: R Mackay; P Rogers

Action	Timeframe
Write up the notes —[Conceptual] Framework to help re-think impact and impact assessment	*'Final' draft circulated mid-May*
Collect & collate other IA frameworks and circulate to workshop [participants]	• Initial draft, end of April • Draft, end May

4.7   Capacity-building

Team: N Hooton; P Kristjanson; O Makui; M Njenga; A Nyaki; (LP Pant); L Sister; C Staver; UPWARD; I Vandeplas

Action	Timeframe
Identify existing courses in our institutions	

Concept notes:
• Course on 'research for impact' or 'linking knowledge with action' aimed at research, project & program managers (CG & partners)
    o Link to empirical evidence
    o Case-study approach
    o Field component?
    o Online component
    o Ensuring: gender
    o Critical readings
	6 months to 1 year

Action	Timeframe
Short, hands-on course or modules on: • gender-mainstreaming • facilitation skills • core competencies for teams/partnerships • self-diagnosis: rethinking impact	

4.8 Communications

Team: I Antezana; J Dixon; C Facheux; J Hellin; ILAC; P Kristjanson; N Lilja; G Manners; J Mowo; PRGA Program; J Watts

Gaps and Opportunities:

Who (target audience)	What
Technical specialists (in NARS, IARCs)	IA & Research methods
Research policy managers & donors	Broad messages with policy implications
Broader agricultural R&D Micro- & meso-leaders	What's going on generally
Broader body of evaluation professionals	

Action	Timeframe
Organize spreadsheet of frameworks, methods and impact-types used in research reported at RIW & make it available (via website)	*Done*
Summary report of meeting (including key messages)	*This document*
Proceedings	Summer 2008 —*Near completion*
'Policy' Brief(s) on workshop themes: • *Key issues* • *Suggested actions for CGIAR leaders* • *Follow-up action by Workshop participants and organizers*	For Alliance Deputy Executive meeting (ADE) in June 2008 —*Done*
Key messages and documents (incl. Briefs) in Spanish	

Action	Timeframe
Key messages and documents in French	
Special issue of journal – initial investigation of possibilities	*One journal contacted; pending feedback*
Send Summary & Proceedings to evaluation societies or interest groups	
Presentation to AEA meeting	Abstract submitted
Search function for papers on website [linked to first action in this table]	

4.9 Histories and political economy of agricultural and natural resources science and technology

Team: H Beardon; S Biggs; P Cherono; B Douthwaite; B Gurung; D Horton; S O'Reilly; L Pant; N Röling; A Tipilda; T Wind

Action	Timeframe
Informally collect studies & circulate to team: • Stories of 'resistance' • Workshop on politics of knowledge in agriculture & natural-resources management	*Done*

5 Summary research and evaluation characteristics of selected papers presented at the workshop

5.1 Paper selection

The open call for papers resulted in 98 paper abstracts being submitted. From these, the selection committee invited 35 authors to present their papers at the workshop in Cali. Due to some last-minute travel problems, only 31 of those papers were presented at the workshop. Outside the open-call procedure, 7 individuals were invited to prepare and present keynote papers.

The workshop had three themes: (1) linking research with action for sustainable poverty reduction, gender mainstreaming and social inclusion; (2) evaluation and impact assessment; and (3) institutional and behavioral changes for sustainable poverty reduction, gender mainstreaming

and social inclusion. Selected papers were divided among the three themes, but nearly all papers discussed elements of all three themes. At the workshop, a brief survey was conducted with all authors, asking questions about their impact-assessment framework, methods used and impact assessed, in addition to some basic project characteristics.

This summary analysis is based on the 30 full-length papers received by the organizers at the time of the workshop in March 2008.

5.2   Project countries

Thirty countries were represented in the selected papers (see Fig. 5); 12 studies covered a single country and 18 studies covered multiple countries. Nine studies covered projects operating in Africa and nine covered projects in Asia. Three studies reported on projects in Latin America and one in Middle East. Eight studies covered projects working at a multi-regional level.

Figure 5: Map of countries represented in the selected papers.

5.3   Project characteristics
Half of the study projects were ongoing and half were completed. Eight projects studied in the selected papers focused on crop production, four on aquaculture or animal husbandry, four on natural-resource management, three on agroforestry or forest management, and two on

community development or advisory services. Three of the selected papers did not study agricultural projects *per se*, but were conceptual papers without reference to specific projects. Six of the papers studied situations which involved multiple types of agricultural projects.

5.4 Conceptual impact assessment framework

Based on authors' self-definition of their impact-assessment frameworks, the 30 selected papers used 10 types of impact-assessment framework. The complete list of frameworks used is presented in Table 1. The most frequently (7 studies) reported framework was a participatory impact-assessment framework. Six studies used innovation theory framework, five used institutional learning framework and five used a sustainable livelihoods framework. Two studies used a gender-mainstreaming framework. Transformative learning, institutional economics, relational practice, quasi-experimental impact assessment and political science each had single examples in this set of selected papers.

Table 1. Conceptual impact-assessment framework used

Impact-assessment framework	Number	Percentage of total studies
Participatory impact assessment	7	23%
Innovation theory	6	20%
Institutional learning	5	17%
Sustainable livelihoods framework	5	17%
Gender-mainstreaming	2	7%
Transformative learning	1	3%
Institutional economics	1	3%
Relational practice	1	3%
Quasi-experimental impact assessment	1	3%
Political science	1	3%
Total frameworks	*30*	*100%*

5.5 Impact assessment methods used

All authors reported having used multiple impact assessment methods. A total of 58 methods was reported, covering 19 *types*. A complete list of methods used is presented in Table 2. Nearly half (47%) of the authors reported using some type of participatory monitoring and evaluation methods or participatory rural appraisal tools in their study. About a third (30%) of the authors reported having conducted quantitative surveys and analysis, and nearly a quarter of studies (23%) used case-study methodology for the impact assessment.

Table 2. Impact assessment methods used

Impact assessment method	Number	Percentage of studies using the methods
Participatory monitoring & evaluation, participatory rural appraisal tools	14	47%
Quantitative survey	9	30%
Case study	7	23%
Most significant change	3	10%
Qualitative survey	3	10%
Outcome mapping	3	10%
Document review	3	10%
Benefit–cost analysis	3	10%
Innovation/social innovation histories	2	7%
Social network analysis	2	7%
Institutional analysis/histories	2	7%
Household record-keeping	1	3%
Knowledge tests	1	3%
Value-chain analysis	1	3%
Spatial mapping	1	3%
GPS data	1	3%
Principle score matching	1	3%
Difference in difference	1	3%

5.6 Types of impact documented

Authors reported 83 impacts assessed in their studies, which could be clustered in broad categories of 22 *types*. All types of impacts documented in the selected papers are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Types of impact documented

Type of impact	Number	Percentage of total studies
Technology adoption/production changes	12	40%
Organizational and institutional changes	12	40%
Changes in practice, attitudes, knowledge, skills	11	37%
Income and livelihood, well-being	9	30%
Changes in human capacity	7	23%
Empowerment and equity (poverty and gender)	6	20%
Policy changes/influence	5	17%
Changes in access to, control over and ownership of resources	3	10%
Changes in social networks and relationships	3	10%
Impact of participatory methods	2	7%
Social changes/social inclusion	2	7%
Changes in governance structures	1	3%
Changes in transaction costs	1	3%
Changes in risk perceptions	1	3%
Ex-ante priority-setting and targeting	1	3%
Innovativeness	1	3%
Food security	1	3%
Access to advisory services	1	3%
Environmental sustainability	1	3%
Unanticipated changes	1	3%
Economic surplus	1	3%
Consumption changes	1	3%

The most common (40% of the studies) impacts assessed were technology adoption impacts and production changes. Equally importantly, 40% of the studies also documented institutional changes. Thirty-seven percent of the projects reported changes in practice, attitudes, knowledge and/or skills. Thirty percent of the authors assessed income and livelihood outcomes and/or changes in well-being. Moderately frequently reported impacts were changes in human capacity (23%), empowerment and equity (20%), and policy changes/policy influence (17%).

6   Workshop evaluation

6.1   In-workshop evaluation

At the end of the workshop, outcome 6 (publications and communications) was considered to have been fully met (in terms of planning) by all participants; outcomes 3 (strategies) and 5 (situation analysis) were considered to have been met by about half of the participants (the remaining participants considered both 'partially met'). The remaining outcomes were considered 'partially met.' It was pointed out that several of these outcomes were added at the outset of the workshop to what some already considered quite ambitious outcomes coming out of the Challenge Dialogue process.

6.2   Post-workshop evaluation survey

An evaluation questionnaire was sent (by e-mail) to all participants shortly after the workshop. The questionnaire addressed six areas of interest to the organizing committee:

1. The Challenge Paper
2. Strengths and weaknesses of the CDS process
3. Strengths and weaknesses of the workshop
4. Issues and take-home messages
5. Follow-up activities
6. Final comments

Thirty-five participants responded to the questionnaire out of the 60 to whom it was sent. Not all respondents answered all questions.

Challenge Paper
Participants were asked in a multiple choice question if they had read and/or commented on the Challenge Paper before the workshop. The majority (25 respondents, or 71%) both read and commented on the Challenge Paper, 7 (20%) read it but did not submit comments, and 2 (6%) did not read it.

Strengths and weaknesses of the CDS process
Participants were asked in 'open-ended' questions to describe the strengths and weaknesses of the Challenge Dialogue System.

Strengths (31 responses)

By far the greatest strength of the process was that the Challenge Paper established a basis for increased understanding of the topic as preparation for the workshop (19 respondents). Responses under this heading included knowledge of the organizing committee's choice of topics, context and background. Closely related to this were identification of the key challenges, providing focus, and generating pre-workshop alignment.

The second greatest strength was the active engagement and debate stimulated by the process (9 respondents), followed by the self-reflection encouraged by the process (6). Three respondents identified the Challenge Paper itself as a major strength.

Other strengths of the CDS process identified were (1 or 2 respondents each): it primed discussion; it was an innovation in itself; it saved time at the workshop; it provided a framework; the process itself; it made the workshop feel well-organized; the ability to hear the views of others, both the organizing committee and other participants; it showed what was expected of participants; it revealed gaps in personal knowledge; it created an emotional connection.

Weaknesses (35 responses)

Five respondents said there were no weakness. In particular with respect to weaknesses, some commented on the overall CDS process and some focused on the Challenge Paper.

The most frequently cited weakness (albeit explicitly from only 6 respondents) was that it was too long—this presumably referring to the Challenge Paper.

Five respondents commented on the time involved, either that the process required too much time, or else that not enough time was available to do the process justice.

Five respondents implied that the Challenge Paper was too complicated, indicating that it was confusing, difficult to read, and had too many (conceptual and linguistic) levels.

Four participants specifically noted that there was too much material (apparently with reference to the Challenge Paper)—this is clearly linked to the first two weaknesses. Perhaps alluding to the same issue, one participant implied that the salient issues were buried and needed to be found before they could be responded to.

At the other end of the spectrum, one respondent wrote "too narrowly focused"!

Two respondents were apparently unimpressed with the process as executed: one saying that it was not really appropriate to the workshop, and the other that the paper did not fit the purpose (although this respondent did like the *idea* of the CDS).

Other weaknesses of, and criticisms leveled at, the CDS process were (1 or 2 respondents each): it didn't say what the organizing committee wanted to achieve; the request for respondents to focus on one section of the Challenge Paper may have distracted some from reading and responding to the whole Paper; it had no coherent focus; it made unsubstantiated assumptions and presumed agreement with them, it seemed to have the role of driving agreement; there was no space for 'thinking outside the box'; it was over-structured; more response was required, but how to encourage that; there was insufficient interaction; it read like a document for validation rather than one to stimulate dialogue; the process presumed that all (or most) participants would read the CDS material before the workshop; there was insufficient discussion of what is meant by 'poverty'; it was unclear how the papers should have fit in with the CDS process; it was too formalized; there was not enough understanding of what participants were going to do with the process (i.e. where were we going with it?); process was unclear; insufficiently challenging; bland; too broad.

Overview of strengths and weaknesses of the CDS process
"One man's meat is another man's poison"—so says the old proverb, and so say the evaluation results related to the Challenge Dialogue System! Although several participants thought the Challenge Paper and CDS process long, broad and complicated, the feeling one gets from the feedback on strengths is that there was some general appreciation of the process, especially with respect to providing background and setting context.

Overall, we might conclude that the Paper and process gave participants much to think about in advance of the workshop, and may have leveled the playing field in terms of background knowledge; however, with more time, the paper might have been written in simpler language to make it more readable and understandable to everyone.

Strengths and weaknesses of the workshop

Strengths (33 responses)
By far the greatest strength of the workshop was the participants (21 respondents), especially their numbers and diversity (of experience, age, regional background). Linked to this was the second strength, namely the quality and diversity of experience among the keynote speakers and other resource persons (6 respondents).

Five respondents commented on the quality of the workshop organization or the commitment of the organizing committee.

Five respondents appreciated the interaction among practitioners, one commenting "individual participation during the workshop was the highest I have ever seen"! Related to this, 4 respondents appreciated the opportunity to share experiences, 3 respondents appreciated the level of commitment of the participants, and one their motivation. Still in the same general area, 4 participants highlighted the discussions, both in groups and plenary, as a strength.

Four respondents saw strength in making new contacts and the networking that was initiated.

Three respondents appreciated the 5-minute time-slots for panel presentations, which was considered a challenge, providing space for more speakers, and providing focus.

Other strengths of the workshop identified were (1 or 2 respondents each): the setting; the prospect of electronic dialogue; the perspectives brought in from outside of a narrow organizational mandate; the production of, or at least movement toward, action plans; the gallery session of action plans; the flexibility, especially of the organizers and facilitator; the post-workshop evaluation (as reported here); the availability of information on the website prior to the workshop; the facilitation; the learning orientation; the fact that the meeting was dialogue-based; the 'open space' on day 3 (for action-planning); the social events; the reflection on workshop content in the light of the CDS; trying something new; the focus on key issues; the atmosphere that the meeting was held in; time-management; it was inspiring; it focused on the bigger picture; the fact that there were few long presentations; showing alternative ways of running workshops; the level of scholarship among participants; the logistics; the 'yoga' breaks.

Weaknesses (39 responses)
By far the biggest weakness was time (17 respondents)—time for the workshop as a whole, for questions, discussion, and to discuss linkages between approaches; the agenda was considered "congested" and the schedule "demanding." Linked with this aspect, 3 respondents thought the presentations hurried, and one that the debate was "superficial."

The second weakness was that the workshop was over-structured, directed and over-organized (7 participants).

Five respondents felt that the CDS and the workshop did not fit well together, that the hybridization of a traditional presentation-based workshop with the CDS process of seeking alignment on issues didn't really work. Perhaps related to this, 4 participants criticized the facilitation of the workshop.

Three respondents thought that there were too many participants or too many papers.

Another 3 respondents said that the workshop focused on impact assessment at the expense of looking at ways of improving research strategy development or rethinking impact *per se*.

Other weaknesses of, and criticisms leveled at, the workshop were (1 or 2 respondents each): lack of focus on evaluation; format (lack of PowerPoint for panel presentations); disconnection between papers and plenary sessions; missing elements (e.g. looking at R&D programs from a rights perspective); a mismatch between the process and the group gathered; failure to follow the framework; too much information; a framework was given for [panel] presentations, but not the papers; becoming bogged down in discussion over assumptions; unrealistic objectives, consequently not achieved; perfunctory end-of-workshop evaluation; program not conducive to reaching conclusions; some participants being ill-disciplined; too CG-focused, dichotomy between CG people and others; action items piecemeal rather than strategic; lack of agreement on working definitions; too broad an agenda; disjunction between keynote and panel presentations [in the same theme]; lack of context; too few economic and environmental impact-assessors; unclear aim; no sense of direction; no agreed outcomes; "excessively pre-cooked starting point"; open space on day 3 [for action-planning] too loose, resulting in no true *group* actions; the mix of participants; lack of coherent structure; impromptu readjustment of agenda, not following CDS throughout workshop; apparently poor relationship between organizers and facilitator; no strategy for follow up; lack of final 'conference statement.'

Overview of strengths and weaknesses of the workshop
Once again, we see clearly that what suits one person does not necessarily suit another. While there was a general appreciation of the number and diversity of participants, three respondents suggested that there were too many people involved. Many respondents commented on the quality of discussion and interaction in one way or another, presenting a broad spectrum from those who thought it second to none, through a good number who appreciated these aspects as strengths, to those who considered the time poorly used and discussion ill-focused and even shallow. Similarly, comments on the short presentation time ranged from those who saw it as good practice and helping with the focus, to those who considered it rushed, difficult to follow and probably a waste of time.

Several people felt that the CDS process did not blend well with the 'traditional' workshop approach of many presentations. The agenda was revised somewhat to respond to participants that requested more 'open space' for discussions (i.e. they could suggest the action areas/topics for break-out sessions). Some thought the revised agenda didn't go far enough, while a couple of others bemoaned the change and would rather have stuck with the original agenda.

Overall, it seems fair to say that most appreciated the number and diversity of their fellow participants, but this imposed time constraints on the meeting. It seems likely that the organizing committee agreed with those participants that voiced against the CDS process, given that they agreed to their demands and reworked the agenda for the second and third days.

Issues and take-home messages (32 responses)
Two comments were made by 11 (over a third) of the respondents each:
- In general there is a need to improve our means of measuring the impact of research for poverty reduction;
- There is an opportunity/need to change projects/programs/donors and institutionalize new approaches.

Other issues and take-home messages were:
- We need to improve our understanding of issues like causality, contribution vs attribution in the context of complex programs aimed at reducing poverty, and the impact assessment of such programs (7 respondents)
- The meeting participants represent a great potential for networking for support, information sharing and possibly action (6)
- There was a lot of discussion and analysis of the weaknesses of the CGIAR system as it relates to research oriented toward poverty alleviation, impact assessment policies, incentives and other policy mechanisms that would support management of research in a more participatory and solution-oriented manner (6)
- Poverty is a complex phenomenon that requires an integrated approach to address it (6)
- Need methodology guidelines and capacity-building for different approaches to impact assessment
- In designing research and assessing it, the contribution of both social and natural systems to poverty alleviation needs to be recognized and managed for (5)
- The meeting was an opportunity for the presentation and sharing of experiences from many cases in different countries and approaches and situations (5)
- In impact assessment and evaluation of research for poverty alleviation, we need to measure all aspects of impact, not just economic (5).

Follow-up activities (36 respondents)
Participants were asked to rate their level of commitment to follow up on the workshop *vis-à-vis* networks and contacts, specific activities, and changing the way they do their work. Overall, most respondents reported being strongly committed to maintaining networks and contacts (69%), and many changing the way they do their own work (45%) and following up on specific activities (45%):

Level of commitment	No. respondents		
	Network and contacts	*Specific activities*	*Changing the way of doing work*
Strongly committed	23	15	13
Somewhat committed	9	14	9
Not committed	1	4	7

More specific details on follow-up activities are given in the Action Plans (section 4).

Final comments (23 responses)

Some eight participants took the opportunity to thank the organizers for their efforts, and a further six expressed their appreciation of various aspects of the workshop. Five respondents specifically commended good organization and "good work." One comment phrased positive feedback in an interesting way:

- *The identification of follow up activities and a promise for follow up made me believe that this was not another talk-shop but a Business Un-usual workshop.*

Five respondents expressed a hope that the workshop would not be the end of the process, variously requesting continued work by the 'teams' in implementing the action plans, and a more focused follow-up workshop to tackle specific issues.

Four respondents provided negative feedback here, one indicating that the CDS was not appropriate in this setting.

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