



# WorldFish

## Center Strategy Update



2005-2008

## Positioning Ourselves for Growth and Greater Impact

The past 18 months have been a dynamic period at the WorldFish Center as we implement a broad program of changes as part of an organizational transformation. In this comprehensive process of review and revision, we have been critically assessing the Center's *operational capacity* to meet its mandate and devising a *strategic plan* to provide a clear sense of direction for the years ahead.

Every organization, of course, must adapt periodically to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness. While the sweeping nature of the current restructuring at the WorldFish Center may be unprecedented, the move is in line with an evolution that has been underway for some time. When the Center was incorporated into the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) in 1992, the development brought a number of challenges. Among them was the need to bring WorldFish's organizational culture more in line with its elevated global status and its membership in the CGIAR.

Moving the Center's headquarters from the Philippines to a new home in Penang, Malaysia, was a significant step in establishing a secure base for the WorldFish Center and its expanding activities.<sup>1</sup> With the physical transition behind us, the Board of Trustees called recently for a thorough look at the Center's organizational framework and operations to ensure that WorldFish is well prepared to fulfill its mission in an era of new challenges and opportunities.

### Responding to External Changes

We are examining the Center's present position particularly in light of current trends and changing conditions in the environment in which we work.

One dominant factor is a *growing recognition that aquaculture and improved fisheries management have a vital role to play in feeding a ballooning global population*. Aquaculture is now the fastest-growing sector of food production worldwide, accounting for nearly a third of all the fish and other seafood that people consume. With the demand for fish soaring as wild fish harvests steadily decline, aquaculture is bound to expand considerably to help meet that demand. At the same time, fish are an increasingly important export commodity for developing countries. With international markets and the global economy changing rapidly, expertise is needed to ensure that the poor get a fair share of the benefits from expanded trade in fish.

Also affecting our work significantly are *shifting priorities among donors and partners*. Many institutions in the development community are now tying their support to programs aimed at helping to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, which call for reducing extreme hunger and poverty by at least half over the next decade. We know, from impact assessments and on-the-ground results, that the Center's work contributes in a number of ways, both directly and indirectly, to meeting the Millennium Development Goals. A variety

<sup>1</sup> Founded in 1977 as the International Center for Living Aquatic Resources Management, or ICLARM, the Center changed its name after it relocated to Malaysia in 2000.

of innovative aquaculture technologies developed by WorldFish scientists and their many collaborators are giving increasing numbers of poor rural families a steady supply of fish for food, improved nutrition, income, and in many cases long-term livelihoods – in general, providing the basis for a brighter future. If we can extend these projects much farther afield, millions more people stand to benefit.

Another situation we must be responsive to are *changes in the CGIAR system itself*. New financing arrangements are coming into play, project-based management and multi-disciplinary research are being promoted, and the CGIAR is eager to develop new approaches for collective action in tackling world hunger, poverty, and environmental degradation.

Finally, we recognize the importance of meeting *stakeholders' demands for greater accountability and efficiency* in program operations.

## Toward Strategic Planning

The organizational transformation now underway is designed to improve the Center's ability to respond to changing expectations in this dynamic landscape. We are investing in a number of initiatives that will strengthen our ability to deliver the kind of proven solutions that donors and developing countries are clamoring for in their efforts to eradicate hunger and poverty.

Most significantly, there is an awareness that to increase our impact – and move to a higher echelon of influence – *growth is necessary*. We must expand our geographic scope, increase the breadth and depth of our research, and boost our global leadership role in address-

ing fisheries and aquaculture issues relevant to the world's poor.

To guide the Center's growth and development over the next decade, we are thinking strategically about how we can best apply our expertise and direct resources to achieve maximum impact.

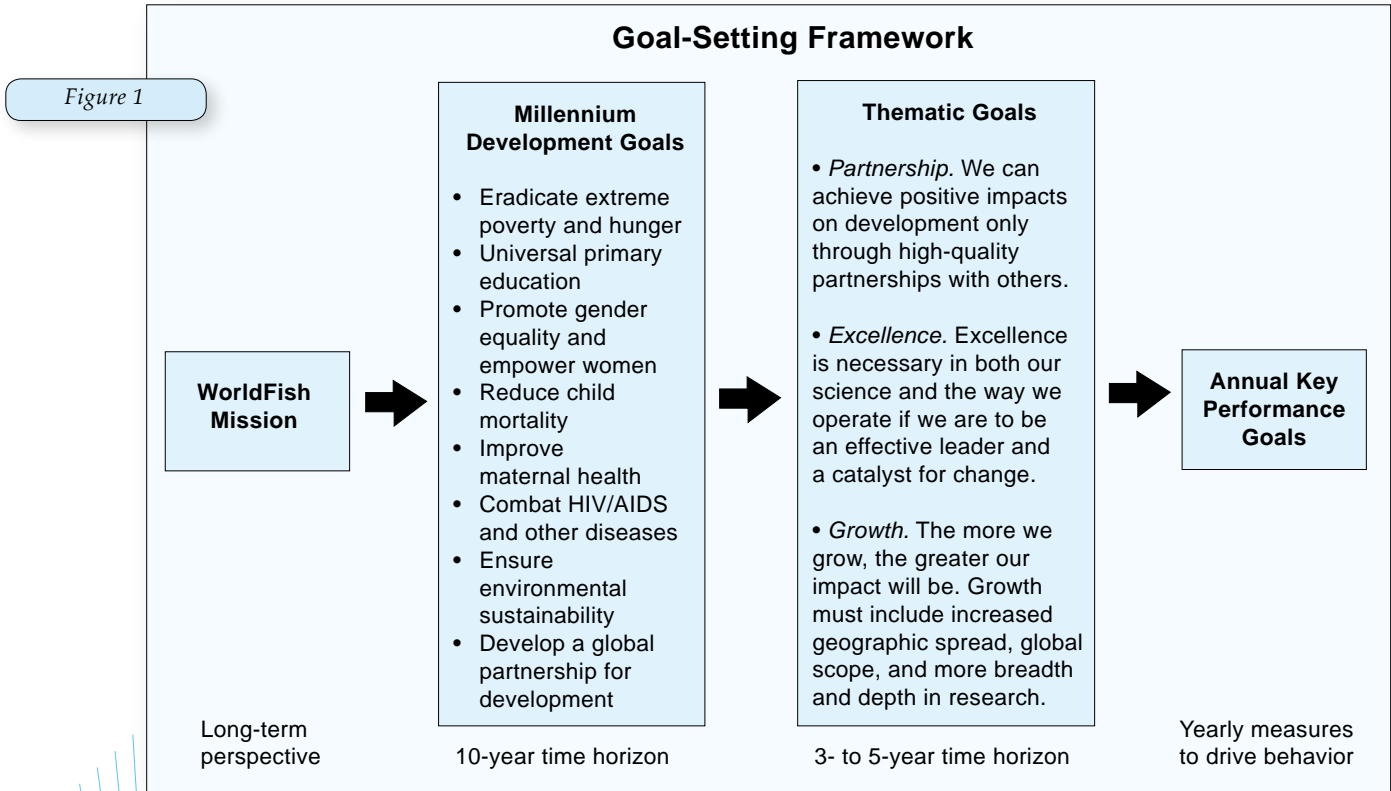
Because strategic planning must be driven by the fundamental purpose and values of an organization, we revisited the Center's basic mandate and operating philosophy. From this came a new mission statement, vision statement, and codification of institutional values.<sup>2</sup> Our stated values reflect our desire to be an organization that is equitable, collaborative, fully accountable, and committed to doing high-quality work; essentially, a "partner of choice" for other institutions that share our commitment to reducing hunger and poverty through science-based solutions.

## Goal-Setting System and Performance Monitoring

Next, we established a multi-tiered system of organizational goals [see Figure 1]. Included in this is a detailed set of targets for assessing performance and measuring outputs. These measures will motivate internal performance day to day, and give stakeholders a quantifiable means of judging the Center's success in making good on its commitments.

**Long-term goals.** Like many of the other CGIAR research centers, WorldFish has tied its larger objectives to the Millennium Development Goals. A fundamental strength of these goals is that they are explicit about the impacts they aim to achieve over the next decade in

<sup>2</sup> WorldFish's mission statement: "To reduce poverty and hunger by improving fisheries and aquaculture." The vision statement reflects the desire to be an effective science partner to other institutions pursuing similar work. Prized qualities highlighted in the Center's corporate values include trust and integrity, fairness and equity, teamwork, knowledge-sharing, and innovation.



improving various aspects of human welfare; hence, they offer a highly focused lens through which the Center can design and assess its research activities. And because so many institutions in the development arena have incorporated them into their own program goals, there are many opportunities to increase impact through clearly targeted collaborative efforts.

**Intermediate goals.** Three broad thematic goals were adopted to emphasize several aspects of organizational development that we must focus on intensively over the next three to five years for the Center to realize its vision of increased impact. These three thematic goals are:

- *Growth*, which is necessary to fulfill our mandate
- *Excellence*, in the science we do and in how we operate
- *Partnership*, which is crucial for growth and to deliver results

**Yearly goals.** The theoretical frameworks we drew on in planning the WorldFish Center’s organizational transformation stress the importance of having in place a rigorous system of key performance goals, with related benchmarks to assess progress.<sup>3</sup> Performance indicators also help satisfy the World Bank’s demand for greater accountability by the CGIAR centers

<sup>3</sup> Our strategic planning process has been guided in part by a paper titled “Are You Sure You Have a Strategy?” by D.C. Hambrick and J.W. Fredrickson, in *Academy of Management Executive*, November 2001. Additional direction in developing performance goals and indicators came from *The Strategic Factor System*, by G. Kenny, 2002

in the face of increased competition for limited funds. In short, the Bank’s grant awards are increasingly being tied to measurable outputs and impacts.

The initial set of annual key performance goals we drafted (effective in 2005) are focused on five primary stakeholder groups whose close interaction with the WorldFish Center is critical to its success. These groups include partners, donors, and the Center’s own staff. We recognized, in drafting the performance targets and indicators, that our relationship with these stakeholder groups is a two-way interaction; importantly, our goals reflect not only what we want from our stakeholders, but also what they want from us.

These performance goals have been posted on our Intranet site so everyone on staff can see at a glance whether the Center is on track to achieve our explicit objectives. The next step entails drafting related performance goals and indicators for functional departments and individuals. This “cascading” process, when fully implemented, will result in a Center-wide hierarchy of performance goals that are coherent

and clearly linked with the WorldFish Center’s overall objectives.

Achieving standards of excellence in both performance and operations requires an organization to have in place a competent work force and high-quality technical support to manage corporate affairs smoothly and efficiently. As part of our ongoing transformation, WorldFish is pursuing a number of measures to strengthen our operations, including the following:

- A SAP-based “enterprise resource planning” system, designed to suit WorldFish’s needs, was installed. It will streamline management and accounting functions, provide greater transparency, and improve coordination between our offices in eight countries.
- Research management has been revised for sharper focus and greater clarity of responsibilities and accountability [see Figure 2].
- To ensure higher staff motivation, commitment and productivity, the pay and performance appraisal

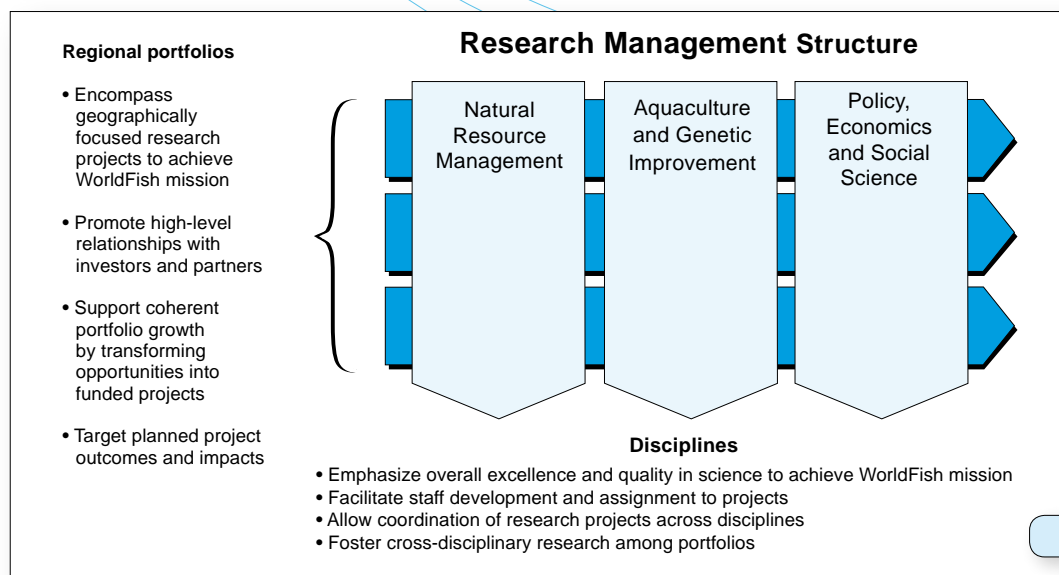


Figure 2



systems are being revamped and more opportunities for training and leadership development are being made available.

### Strategy Revision

In developing a unified strategy for how the WorldFish Center will achieve its mission over the next decade, we have focused on five key questions:

- What areas we will be active in, and to what extent (arenas)?
- How will we distinguish WorldFish from its competitors (differentiators)?
- What will be the pace and sequence of our activities (staging)?
- How we will get where we want to be (vehicles)?

- How we will mobilize necessary resources (economic logic)?

### Comparative Advantages in Research

In any development-related problem, the process leading from basic research to the realization of a positive impact on human welfare can be viewed as a chain or pathway. Various organizations contribute at different stages, based on their individual strengths.

The WorldFish Center is capable of providing expertise at a number of different stages along this research-to-impact continuum. Because resources are finite, however, we need to think strategically about *how, and to what extent, our involvement will add value and provide certain benefits.* That is, what role

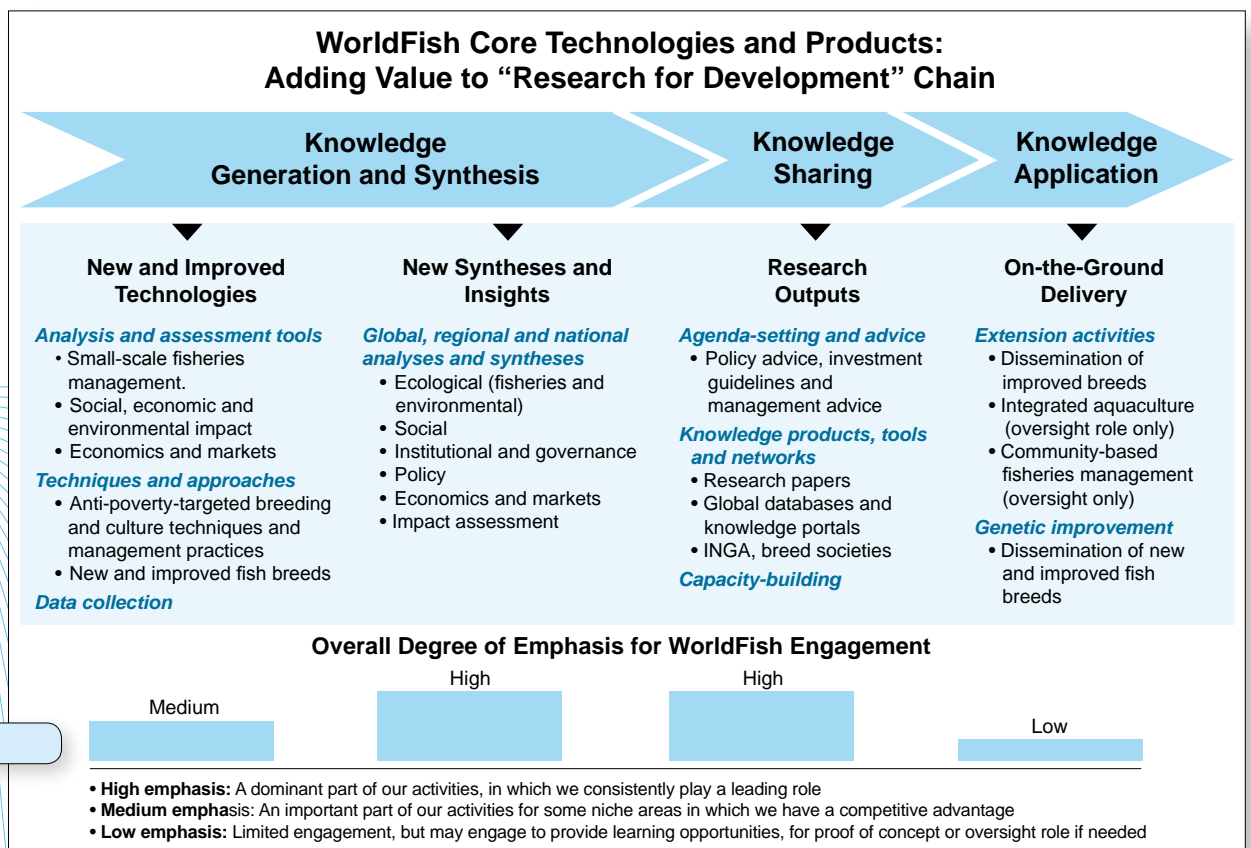


Figure 3

should we play to significantly advance the overall process, and which activities are best left to our research partners?

In answering this question, it is important to assess the Center’s areas of greatest strength relative to other institutions involved in development activities. Based on our broad perspective, our core technologies and competencies, and other attributes, we think *the Center has competitive advantages in certain areas of knowledge generation, synthesis, and sharing.* (Consistent with membership in the CGIAR, the creation of “international public goods” will remain an important area of focus.)

We will look to other organizations to play the leading role in *knowledge application* – extension activities and technology dissemination. Figure 3 summarizes priority areas for

WorldFish involvement at various stages of the research-for-development process.

How does that scenario translate to our day-to-day activities? Naturally, we have a good idea about the kinds of research we think are strategically logical for the Center to pursue in the next three to five years because they will add significant value in relation to the contributions of other organizations. More challenging is the need to be specific about the *particular activities we will maintain or increase*, along with those we will minimize or avoid engagement in. Refining this agenda will be an ongoing process. However, we have developed a basic framework – compiled from a disciplinary perspective – that will help guide our investment decisions in this regard [see Figure 4].




Areas of WorldFish Activity Based on Research Disciplines		
Natural Resource Management	Aquaculture and Genetic Improvement	Policy, Economics and Social Science
 <p>We will increase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of tools for small-scale fisheries management</li> <li>• Fisheries analysis for management of inter-sectoral basins and coastal zones</li> <li>• Ecological assessment</li> <li>• Research support for management approaches involving interaction between water and fisheries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesis of lessons and approaches for management of production systems (including environmental and health)</li> <li>• Genetic improvement</li> <li>• Development of dissemination methodologies</li> <li>• Coordination and synthesis of research on low-cost feed and fishmeal replacement</li> <li>• Development of livelihood options based on adding value to aquatic products</li> <li>• Focus on coastal aquaculture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional and governance analysis</li> <li>• Gender analysis and the role fish in human development</li> <li>• Development of tools for policy development and decision-making</li> <li>• Analysis of trade and market access and private-sector development</li> <li>• Studies of small-scale fisheries and their role in decentralized governance and economic development</li> <li>• Research support for local (rural) commercial approaches to development</li> <li>• Analysis of ecological/environmental economics</li> </ul>
<p><b>Overall increase in:</b> Comparative analysis and synthesis; development of future scenarios (such as global change); development of cross-sectoral linkages and knowledge networks; institutional capacity-building; research on environmentally sustainable management practices</p>		
 <p>We will maintain or adapt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge bases</li> <li>• Stock enhancement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissemination of new breeds</li> <li>• Focus on inland aquaculture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact assessment</li> <li>• Resource valuation</li> <li>• Co-management arrangements and their (real) implication for poverty reduction through small-scale fisheries</li> </ul>
 <p>We will not do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lab-based genetic analysis research</li> <li>• Development of tools for stock assessment of single species</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of post-harvest technologies</li> <li>• Breeding and culture research</li> <li>• Development of technologies for fish disease diagnosis and treatment</li> <li>• Extension of aquaculture technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct (operational) support to community-based management in Asia</li> <li>• Traditional farm-management surveys at the micro level</li> </ul>

Figure 4

## Priority Regions

In general, *research activities that advance progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals will remain the central focus of our work.* Specifically, we plan to devote considerable attention and resources to poverty-reduction efforts in *Africa*, which has the most acute need for the kind of work we do. Fish supply in Africa is in a crisis, with per-capita fish consumption declining, in contrast to other areas of the world. There is a huge potential for many countries on the continent, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, to benefit from increased investment in aquaculture; to increase fish production on a small scale for local consumption, and commercially to exploit the growth of international trade in fish.

Other priority regions in the near term are *Asia* and the *South Pacific*. Because Asia has a rapidly growing population that is heavily dependent on fish for food and income, we will continue building on our already strong program of activities in that region. The South Pacific will also remain an area of focus because many of its island nations have high levels of poverty and a desperate need for environmentally sustainable sources of livelihood from aquatic resources.

Our new research management structure, with its series of regional portfolios, reflects these areas of geographical focus. In each portfolio the Center will address issues in which research is needed to inform policies and improve national and regional management of fisheries and aquaculture development. In each of the regions, we have identified *a number of focal countries where we plan to concentrate our efforts* for at least the next three to five years [see Figure 5]. The particular countries were selected in part because we think they pose research challenges

for which the solutions will be applicable to other geographical areas with similar socio-economic, cultural, and political conditions. Other factors that affected our selection included the levels of available resources, institutional support, partnership prospects, and human development needs.

Moreover, within each geographical region where we plan to work we must determine *the types of aquatic systems that merit the greatest amount of attention* in relation to what we do, whether coastal waters and lagoons; floodplains, rivers and streams; lakes and ponds; coral reefs; or offshore fisheries and open waters. Each category entails different research problems, technologies, and management and policy issues.

While specific regional concerns are of central importance in our strategy, WorldFish will also continue to undertake *broader regionally and globally relevant fisheries-related research* – something the Center is uniquely qualified to do by virtue of its global perspective and multi-disciplinary capability. Examples include guidance on trade and other policy initiatives, the development of knowledge-sharing networks, and mechanisms for improved management of aquatic resources

## Distinctive Attributes

Besides identifying areas of focus and comparative strength, we must have a clear idea, in strategic planning, about the attributes for which we want the WorldFish Center to be recognized. Cultivating and emphasizing these characteristics is important to distinguish the Center from other organizations also involved in human development and poverty-reduction efforts, especially in a highly competitive funding environment.



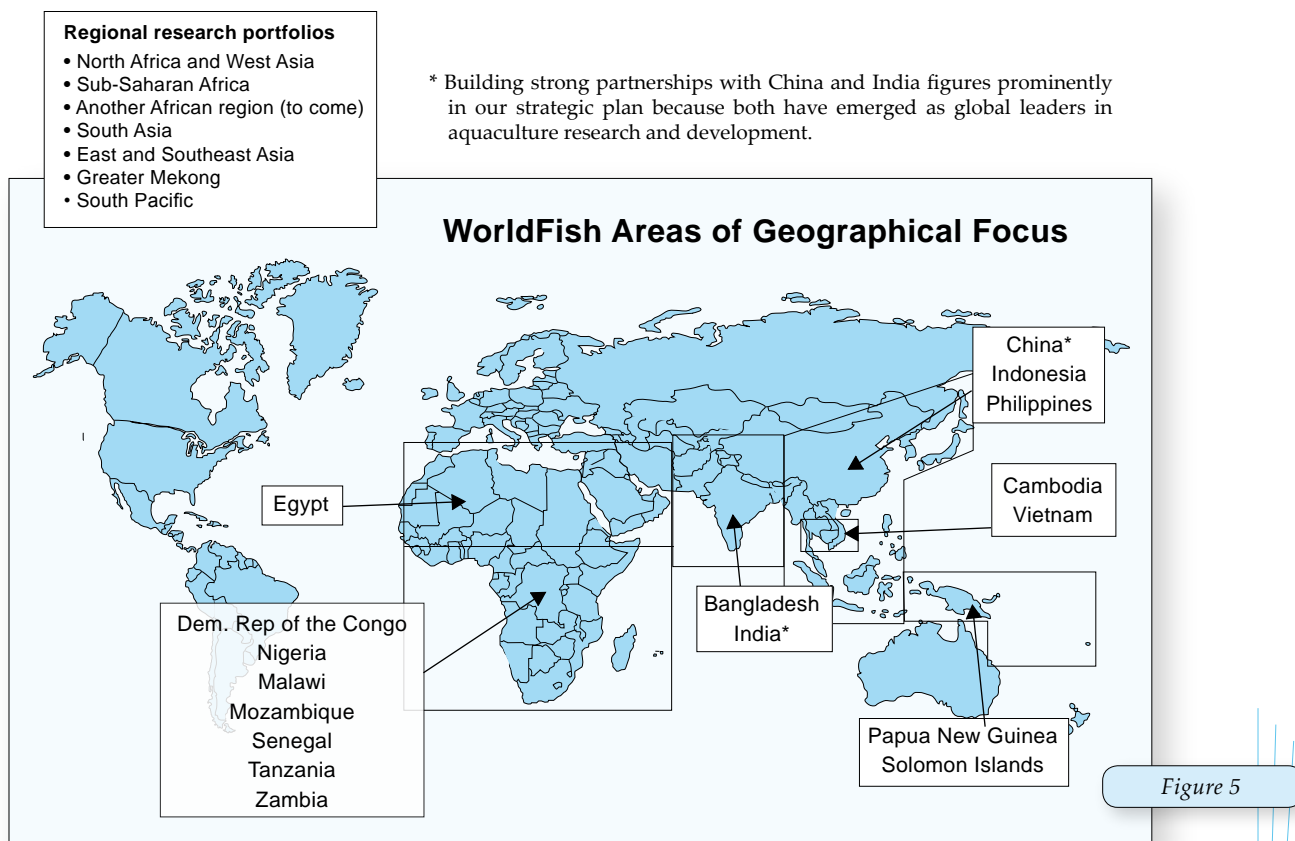


Figure 5

Differentiating factors of an organization are not necessarily single attributes; rather, it is usually a unique combination of qualities and strengths that confer an advantage. To assess the distinctive attributes of WorldFish, we compared its position with that of other institutions (the CGIAR, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, regional bodies, non-governmental organizations, and national research institutes) in relation to several characteristics that included the focus, nature, and geographic scope of activities. This exercise led us to identify a set of institutional strengths that we think funders and collaborators should find compelling in weighing the WorldFish Center’s merits as a “science partner of choice” [see Figure 6].

### Avenues for Achieving Impact

How will we get where we want to go? We have identified several pathways by which the WorldFish Center can work to achieve its goals and solidify support:

**Partnerships.** The primary vehicle is strong partnerships with other groups and organizations that share common objectives in reducing hunger and poverty. Partnerships are critical to the Center’s work because they increase resources, provide complementary skills, and extend geographic reach. Our strategic plan includes nurturing existing partnerships that add value to our efforts and developing new ones that can help us increase our impact.

### What Makes the WorldFish Center Different?

- WorldFish can provide technologies and tools in niche areas of poverty reduction efforts that other organizations do not focus on.
- WorldFish can add greater value to partners' efforts through our ability to synthesize and integrate knowledge at the regional and global levels.
- WorldFish can more effectively harness the broad range of resources needed for development-related research by virtue of our international status and partner networks.
- WorldFish can provide a clear focus for research aimed at reducing poverty and hunger because that agenda overlaps with our own organizational mission and goals.
- WorldFish is committed to translating into practice its institutional values of innovation, adaptability, responsiveness, efficiency, integrity, and accountability.

Figure 6

**Strategic alliances.** Some partner organizations offer a range of skills or services that, when aligned with WorldFish's capabilities, can significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of certain aspects of our operations. Our strategic plan includes establishing such relationships with a small number of other institutions. We recently arranged to share corporate services functions with the International Water Management Institute in Colombo, Sri Lanka (also affiliated with the CGIAR), and are exploring with the People's Republic of China a joint research program on genetic improvement of fish.

**Program growth.** One of the most logical and efficient ways of increasing the Center's impact is to do more of what we have already been doing well, with the support of our traditional investors. We recognize there is tremendous potential to spread our proven poverty-reduction approaches and technologies to many more areas where such solutions are needed. Developing our core business makes sense in part because, compared with other options, it poses relatively low risk.

**WorldFish campaigns.** The Center's "Fish for All" initiative, launched in 2002, has been highly successful in raising widespread awareness about the important role of sustainable aquaculture and fisheries in feeding the world's growing population. We see the "Fish for All" model as a useful framework for galvanizing joint action in the fisheries sector toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Aligning our research activities with the interests and contributions of partners at the national, regional, and global levels will bring a bigger payoff than diffused efforts. Therefore, we plan to conduct, over the next three to five years, several phased-in campaigns in which we will work to steer development-oriented activities toward certain highly targeted initiatives that benefit the poor. The following themes have been identified:

- *Global Change and Fisheries* (understanding and exploiting the global vectors of change affecting fisheries and aquaculture so that they benefit the poor)

- *Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods* (ensuring sustainable and well-managed fish supply from coastal and inland fisheries)
- *Aquaculture for the Poor* (increasing the sustainable production of fish through aquaculture as a source of protein and income for poor communities)
- Promoting the *differentiating factors* and core strengths that “brand” us
- Strengthening *unique attributes* such as our mix of research skills and our ability to develop inter-sectoral linkages

## Acquiring Resources

Faced with an ambitious agenda of growth and development, we are devising a time frame for pursuing various measures that we think will put the WorldFish Center on a stronger footing in the years ahead. Activities in 2006 will include consolidating our laboratory and training facilities, allocating more resources to strengthening our core scientific capacity, continuing to explore a strategic alliance with China, and planning and launching at least one WorldFish campaign.

Meanwhile, we must continue thinking creatively and pro-actively about how to generate the resources needed to conduct our work. As part of our organizational transformation, we are working to win investors' confidence by optimizing the Center's capacity to provide a full accounting of research costs and investments, among other things. We expect to generate demand for our research through strategies that include:

- Offering premium *services and products*
- Exercising leadership to help set the *agenda for development-related research* in the aquaculture and fisheries sector
- Quantifying and communicating *the impact of our work*

## Challenges Ahead

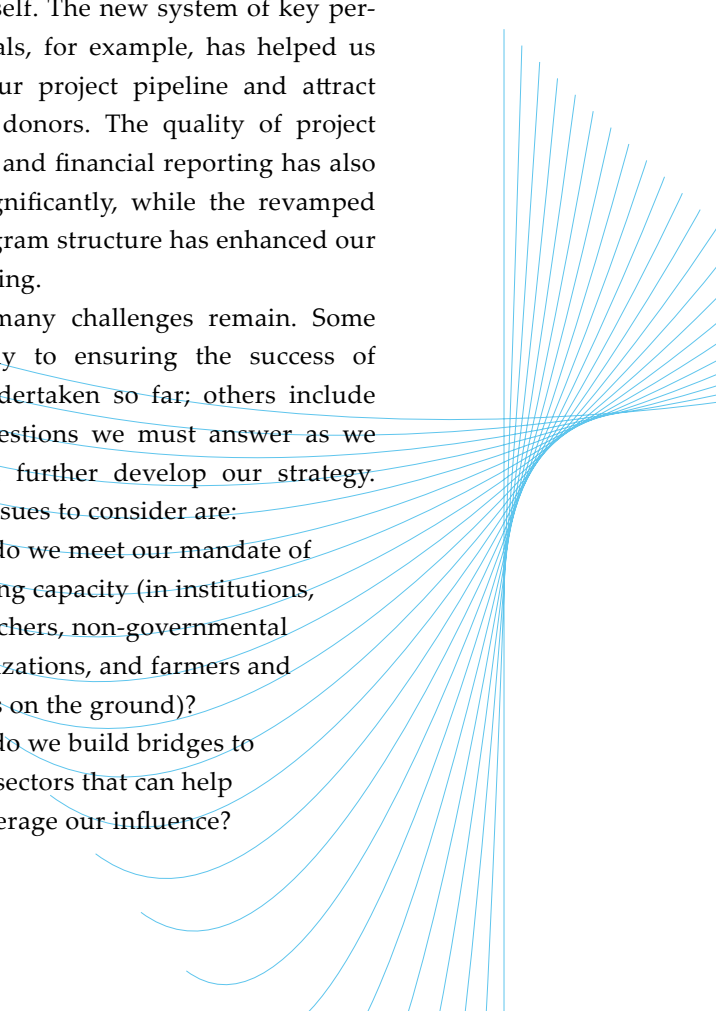
An organizational strategy can never be fixed in stone because of constantly changing conditions that affect our work. Hence, we will continue modifying our strategy in response to internal and external factors.

We do know that a number of the initiatives introduced under the transformation program have led to positive changes within the Center itself. The new system of key performance goals, for example, has helped us strengthen our project pipeline and attract several new donors. The quality of project management and financial reporting has also improved significantly, while the revamped research program structure has enhanced our project planning.

Yet many challenges remain. Some relate directly to ensuring the success of measures undertaken so far; others include a host of questions we must answer as we evaluate and further develop our strategy.

Among the issues to consider are:

- How do we meet our mandate of building capacity (in institutions, researchers, non-governmental organizations, and farmers and fishers on the ground)?
- How do we build bridges to other sectors that can help us leverage our influence?



- How do we attract the best talent and manage performance in ways that help to maximize our impact?
- How do we develop and implement cost-effective collective action among our partner research centers in the CGIAR?
- How do we ensure, amid changing trends and shifting priorities, that our research activities remain highly responsive to the interests and needs of our various stakeholders?

We have learned through experience that one of the foremost challenges we face in the immediate future is conveying effectively the rationale for various changes now being implemented, especially to our staff. One means of doing that that has been a specialized internal communications program. It has proved popular, and has helped energize our work environment by promoting a strong spirit of teamwork. That kind of energy and commitment is a key attribute of the WorldFish as we strive to deliver lasting benefits for the world's poor.