

CIAT Town Hall Meeting

Dr. Patricia Biermayr Intervention:

Good morning. My name is Patricia Biermayr and I am the Leader for the Participatory Research and Gender Analysis Program:

My question is related to future structures, mega programs, or any initiative, or any structure we put in place to work together in the future. First of all, I would like to know the criteria, at least besides whatever we have on the Web, if you can, all of you, or any of you, explain what criteria you're using for the mega programs, whether they are not duplicate challenge programs, systemwide programs, etc., and particularly I want to ask whether the influx and the renewed interest in gender from Maputo until today will give place to a birth of a gender mega program, whether you support a platform, a crisscrossing strategy, a gender mega program, or all of them. Thank you.

Dr. Steve Hall Intervention:

Kathy:

I'm going to ask Steve to take a stack ... crack first at the thing on criteria and strategies, as well as Ren from the perspective of the Secretariat.

Steve:

Thanks, Kathy. The question about criteria for mega programs is, as you can imagine, a pretty rich one and clearly as we work through the next few months and if you look at the documents that are already coming out about the strategic results framework, you can get ... you can begin to get quite a clear sense, I think, of the approach that's being taken.

I don't think I can, even off the top of my head, could list, you know, of all the dimensions that would lead to the choices we need to make, but I encourage you to read those documents because I think they're building quite an exciting kind of approach to thinking through what's ... what's not a straightforward issue. Fundamentally though, the key issues are around how to best deliver impact, and what's the scale of impact they can deliver? How much of a difference is it going to make to the people we're all here and passionately want to help? And, if we ... so ... ultimately, it's about return on investment and return is around the impact on development.

So, that, to me, is the fundamental criterion that's driving this and the process of arriving at mega programs and explaining what those mega programs are about, I think needs to be much more explicitly tied to the impact and the potential for impact that they can deliver, imbedded ... when they are imbedded in a much wider set of investments that Mark has alluded to, around the whole nature of investment in development is needed.

So, that, to me, is the ultimate criterion and we're going to get there through a combination of reasons analysis and what I would call grown-up conversations and intestinal computing. There's a whole set of decision-making around this. It's not straightforward, it's not just analytical. It's a grown-up debate to arrive at the right set of

answers, using the right sort of values in the first place. So, that's where I'd come from with that.

With respect ... and I should also add that, in the context of the private sector, mega programs and the way we think about that are key vehicles for building the partnerships with the private sector and others to ensure that we deliver that impact.

Concerning the issues of current kind of collaborative initiatives whether they may be challenge programs, or SWEPS, or whatever, clearly we've got some thinking to do to work out how to integrate them into this strategy and this portfolio. Have we got all the answers to how we're going to do that right now? ... no! Is it solvable? ... absolutely!

But again, it's an issue with staging. We'll get to it but it's probably not the conversation we need to have quite yet, but it's going to be one that we are going to need to have very soon.

Dr. Ren Wang Intervention:

[... unintelligible] to add on to what Steve and Mark were saying. First of all, I feel to address the question of the mega programs versus or viz-à-viz challenge programs as well. I think we need to come back to the one original sort of concept in designing the change, that is, to sort of organize a paradigm shift in developing the CGIAR research agenda, really shifting towards the results and outputs management or results-and outputs-oriented research agenda, as Kathy was emphasizing in the beginning. In other words, linking our research directly to the development targets, which can be quantifiable and which should be the same development targets that our partners, the private sector, think of them as NARS, also have the same for their development, okay, so that we can eventually have a division of responsibilities to see what are the contributions of the CGIAR centers towards those targets and what will be the responsibilities and contributions of our partners towards the same targets. So, that will be quite important, so we're working towards that.

And the other point is, is that we are at the TMT, that is, the Transition Management Team, is very conscious of the risk of interruptions of the centers' research if we do not plan well, and if we are not conscious of the need for bridging the gap during the transition period. In other words, we are very conscious of that. We need to make good plans, in coordination with the centers, as well as with the donors, so that there are no interruptions. One approach that we are actually putting in place is to ensure that the funding for the challenge programs, at least for now, the current phase is in place, as we have planned, and coordinate it all, so that when the new mega programs are developed, there is a phase of transition. We are still trying to achieve that. So, that's probably the most important point that I think needs sort of to be conveyed.

Dr. Kathy Sierra Intervention about Gender Issues

Let me talk a little bit about the gender issue and then I'll ask ... Jonathan offered to talk about the transition because it is very much on our minds.

I felt and I think we tried to express that last year at the AGM first in China, then in Maputo last year, and in the work that we're doing, that if we don't figure out ways to really integrate into our work the gender dimension that we will not get the outcomes that we're looking for. It's as simple as that. So, this is not a "gee, it's nice to have because we need to check the box" that we saw about the gender dimension. The research that you're all doing, the research that IFPRI's doing, tells us that if we don't think through this dimension, we're just not going to get the outcomes. So, it's not ... it's a paradox.

So, there are two pieces, one as an organization. We've actually invested quite a bit and need to continue to invest in women scientists and women as leaders, both within the organizations of the various centers of the Consortium, but also to the women scientists in the countries where we're working. So, we have a very, I think, strong program of women scientists and, like many of you are probably part of that, we want to keep that going and we want to keep that going for what it's worth. But we also thought that it's not enough. It's not enough just to look internally. To be credible, you got to look internally. You can't go preach, you know, building gender dimensions into the work if you aren't actually doing it at home. That's an important piece but we actually need to kind of really figure out how to integrate this.

Now, there's a debate, a public debate that's not totally ended, about whether you actually build a vertical, you know, program or agenda or you integrate it into the program. I will tell you my bias. My bias is integrate it in the programs, but having some place where we're actually looking at best practices, some place where we're looking across and see how we are doing the evaluating and the like, and so we are doing this part of the work going forward, some thinking around that, some shifting of what's the best way to make sure that it is fundamentally included in programs and not a check-off-the-box exercise. So, any those of you that are interested in that issue, the more the merrier. And it's quite important to me and I hope we will be able to achieve that.