

Initial Synthesis of Feedback The Challenge Dialogue System™



Rethinking Impact: Understanding the Complexity of Poverty and Change A Pre-Workshop Dialogue



Workshop — March 26–28, 2008
Cali, Colombia

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Dear Dialogue Participants:

This *Initial Synthesis of Feedback* report is a preliminary assessment of the feedback received from the *Challenge Paper*¹ – *Rethinking Impact: Understanding the Complexity of Poverty and Change; A Pre-Workshop Dialogue*. A complete list of all comments received is available in an earlier document that was compiled titled: *Consolidated Feedback*.

This synthesis document along with of the previous Challenge Dialogue documents and other background material on the Rethinking Impact Challenge Dialogue are available on the Rethinking Impact Dialogue-Workshop website:

<http://www.prgaprogram.org/riw/Workshop.htm>.

Copies of this report will also be made available for every participant at the workshop.

This initial synthesis along with your detailed comments are be used to help design and inform the upcoming workshop and its supporting *Workbook*.

As you are aware, we had 38 respondents to the Challenge Paper, considerably higher than normal. This synthesis report is organized following the same structure as the Challenge Paper. Quotations from the original feedback are indicated in *italics*.

Our next product in the Dialogue journey is the production of a *Workshop Workbook*. It will mirror the design and flow of the workshop and will be informed directly by your feedback. Don't be surprised if you see a few direct quotes inserted, un-attributed, here and there to illustrate recurring themes on the one hand and the range of views on the other hand.

A DRAFT electronic version of the Workbook available for you to look at in a few days. Printed copies will be available for everyone at the workshop.

We are very excited about the Workshop and are looking forward to meeting with you in Cali to tackle these important challenges collaboratively face-to-face.

We wish you all a safe journey to Cali!

Warm regards,

The Collaborative Workshop Planning Team – Patti Kristjanson, Nina Lilja and Jamie Watts

¹ The *Challenge Paper* is one of a number of tools developed by the *Innovation Expedition* for its *Challenge Dialogue System*TM — a disciplined process that engages diverse groups on discovering collaborative and innovative solutions to complex challenges. www.innovationexpedition.com

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Participants in the Rethinking Impact Workshop (March 26–28, 2008, Cali, Colombia) and other interested persons were asked to provide feedback on a *Challenge Paper* drafted by the Collaborative Workshop Planning Team as a Pre-Workshop Dialogue, aimed to maximize the use of the time at the workshop itself. Feedback was received from a total of 38 respondents.

Some observations from the Planning Team:

The feedback received shows a wide diversity in backgrounds, interests and experience of the participants. Given this diversity, it is perhaps quite striking that there appears to be a high degree of alignment over the *Key Challenge* and *Expected Outcomes* of this Challenge Dialogue. It was also apparent that there was a lot of critical thinking and efforts made towards improving our knowledge based on individual experiences.

It seems that the grouping of issues into our three themes – case studies and lessons learned; impact assessment and evaluation approaches, and institutionalization of new approaches – made sense to most participants, and that this Challenge Dialogue and Workshop are about more than just how to do impact evaluation more effectively (the focus of some past workshops). A lot of this discussion is clearly about **how we carry out research (including impact evaluations) to have more impact** on sustainable, inclusive and equitable poverty reduction. In the words of two participants:

Learning is an answer to a challenge. I think the key challenge is not to learn..., it should be reformulated to reflect the problem for example: unclear how research has contributed or contributes to poverty reduction and other Millennium Development Goals and which methodological approaches are in place to assess that contribution.

There have been many workshops on “impact assessment”, and I thought this next workshop is unique in its attempt to step back and rethink “impact”. After all, we cannot successfully assess something that we (jointly) don’t clearly understand. Isn’t this the reason why the workshop title is on “impact” and not “impact assessment”?

There was a certain amount of skepticism expressed by some over how in practice many of the propositions / lessons can be applied, emphasizing that more ideas and work is needed regarding institutional changes to support such approaches.

Many participants felt that the Dialogue and Workshop would be a success if one or more of the stated outcomes were achieved. Several participants particularly wanted to see plans developed for the production of publications and for widely distributing the findings and implications of the workshop.

I would consider the Challenge Dialogue a greater success [than what is listed] if the ‘thinking’ that came out of it i.e. the publications and more particularly ‘briefs for decision-makers’ really did reach a wide audience.

Some participants felt that the learning / increased understanding outcomes were quite easy and that they would like to see us strive for something ‘more specific and challenging’.

I find the outcomes are vague – ‘learning about’, ‘increased understanding about’. Can this be more specific and challenging please?

Suggested outcomes / actions from the feedback (with number of participants mentioning them in parentheses) can be grouped (although they often overlap) as follows:

- Identification of new ways of thinking about impact; development of lessons and/or strategic guidelines for researchers/practitioners addressing the broader aspects of sustainable poverty reduction (5).
- Identification of strategies/ways of reaching rural poor communities and decision makers with new knowledge; 'ways in which the poor can participate in co-generation and utilization of scientific knowledge'; how to link the contribution of processes to outcomes and impact (6).
- Strategies/plans for pushing forward on methods – e.g. developing new research taking a 'complex systems approach'; applying 'complexity theory'; developing/applying/testing a 'pro-poor innovation systems framework' – although no-one stated it is as such, this could be in the form of specific proposals (3).
- Compilation of practical ways of/strategies towards institutionalizing new methods and approaches within research organizations (with funding organizations also mentioned). Related to this, several participants mentioned pulling together lessons/strategies for using IA for learning and priority setting (5).
- New coalitions/networks developed around the ideas of linking knowledge with action (3).
- Compilation of failures/gaps; evidence of whether international public good-oriented research is an efficient instrument to promote equity versus social inclusion (3).

Given the diversity and quality of knowledge that has already been shared, we look forward to building on it at the workshop and coming up with some concrete action ideas that we can move forward on together!

CHALLENGE PAPER FEEDBACK SYNTHESIS

This section summarizes more detailed feedback from those who responded to the specific input requests in the Challenge Paper. The following synthesis is based on all 38 responses. Please refer to the Challenge Paper for further context and its content details.

Qualification — Please note that we have attempted to provide the reader with a rough 'quantitative' sense of the responses, particularly for those questions of a 'yes' / 'no' nature. Please keep this in mind with the tallies presented below.

INPUT REQUEST #1: KEY CHALLENGE STATEMENT

Is your thinking in alignment with our Key Challenge? What is missing? What is included but is not relevant in your view?

- **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.**

There were 31 responses to the input request on the Key Challenge Statement.

Is your thinking in alignment with our Key Challenge?

Overall, 24 respondents felt that their thinking was aligned with the Key Challenge Statement, although the majority of them requested further feedback or additional elements; 3 respondents said that their thinking was not aligned with the Statement; 3 provided additional ideas without being clear on their alignment with the Statement, and 1 respondent simply raised a number of queries.

Those who said that their thinking was not aligned with the Key Challenge Statement provided the following comments:

- *Learning is an answer to a challenge. I think the key challenge is not to learn..., it should be reformulated to reflect the problem for example: unclear how research has contributed or contributes to poverty reduction and other MDGs and which methodological approaches are in place to assess that contribution. But is this the challenge? or is the challenge what the title suggests: Complexity of Poverty...*
- *I find reference to the objective 'to learn' rather vague and unhelpful in knowing for what purpose we are seeking to learn. Is it to rethink our assumptions, to identify alternatives, to know what doesn't work, to outline a new research agenda? I would like to see a more specific verb and purpose given to the event that enables us to say 'yes we achieved this to some extent because ...' or 'no ... because ...'*
- *I would try and avoid the use of the word sustainable as it begs too many questions. I think we are looking at ensuring the human rights are met, which includes basic rights to food, water, subsistence and freedom (Development as Freedom – A. Sen). The goal of basic human rights would then be met in a range of ways in different contexts.*

- *There is also a need to think in terms of the ability of poor households (relative and absolute) to have the adaptive capacity to cope with stress, shocks and high levels of risk, especially in the renewable natural resource [RNR] sector where impacts of climate change may be felt quickly and with increased severity in poorer communities.*
- *To be able to more clearly articulate the quality of evidence used within the development community and RNR in particular (as much research in health and education already does). How good is our evidence for the assertions we make? This is not a qualitative/quantitative argument but overall do we have lots of suggestive evidence that creates a pattern when a single piece on its own is insufficient?*

General comments

Two respondents queried the level of diversity within the workshop group, one of them concluding:

- *Will the workshop put emphasis on experiences and findings from CGIAR–NARS collaborative research? If yes, then it would be appropriate to reflect this in the Key Challenge statement. If no, then the workshop organizers could seek to enhance wider participation, especially from CGIAR ‘outsiders.’*

Other general comments were the following:

- *‘Research and development community’ subtly implies some linear-type ‘supply-led’ process whose actors need to learn lessons on how to do better. Hopefully the ‘diverse group of colleagues’ is diverse enough to reflect experiences well beyond the research actors.*
- *The challenge statement should be expressed as a challenge: ‘How do we evaluate research so as to learn how it does (and does not) contribute to sustainable poverty reduction, social inclusion and equity, and so that we make it more likely that it does.’*
- *When we speak of impact evaluations, these can be internal (self-evaluation) or external or anything in between or some hybrid of the two. Then, ‘how change comes about’ and ‘who benefits’ and even what these benefits and changes are, depends a lot on whose perspectives held sway in the design of these evaluation approaches, in the definition of impact, and the choice and definition of indicators.*
- *Lack of information in a form that majority can utilize due to language barrier and levels of formal education, different level of infrastructural development in rural areas.*
- *Besides finding approaches, certain ‘bottlenecks’ which are almost inherent to research (driven by publishing instead of demand) and institutions (based on hierarchies), must be tackled before allowing the approaches written on paper to be implemented on the ground.*
- *Clarification was sought (in addition to those listed elsewhere) on whether ‘development community’ includes farmers (and their indigenous knowledge, experiences) as contributors to the knowledge base.*

What is missing?

The majority of feedback provided on the Key Challenge Statement concerned additional elements that respondents would like to see added; however, there was great diversity in elements sought:

- Definition of ‘learning’ in Annex 1.
- Research management and capacity-development for it.

- To understand when and how research on agriculture and natural resource management can contribute to poverty reduction and what are the mechanisms for learning about how to do this more effectively.
- What benefits are derived by different consumers of the goods generated through science, for different consumers have different level of access and use of the goods generated- for example, rural communities may have unique impediments to make use of scientific information so generated?
- Who loses – and the precise nature of any benefits and losses experienced.
- *Evaluation* approaches that attempt to address issues of how changes comes about and who benefits.
- Not only to address how change comes about and who benefits but also who are involved in the decision makings and change process.
- Challenges and failures faced by those that work for poverty reduction and social equity.
- What makes change sustainable?
- The importance of being able to capture processes and outcomes that indicate progress.
- Environment: ecology, **climate change**, biodiversity, etc. — two respondents noted ‘climate change’ as a specific element that was missing (all other additions proposed in this section were suggested by only one respondent each).
- The higher system levels at which conditions for innovation can be created.
- How participatory research approaches contributes to overall economic growth (pro-market as well as pro-poor growth).
- Our dialogue process should move beyond research approaches *per se* and learn ourselves how we practice such approaches in increasingly pluralistic systems. Learning ways to acknowledge alternative perspectives and changing the way we see the world is more important than emphasizing one research approach over another. We should be open to hear criticism on our work avoiding ‘autobiographic syndrome’ of writing our own progress. Reporting participatory research is different than reporting lab reports, the former would have more subjective elements.
- What is preventing poverty reduction, social inclusion and equity?
- Measuring impact—methods and approaches for holistic measurement of research and approaches that take into account scientific evidence as well as stakeholder perspectives.
- Documentation of major gaps in tested approaches and how they could be addressed in the way forward.

What is included but is not relevant in your view?

Other than comments already reported (above) from those who did not feel aligned with the Statement, and about the use of the words ‘learn’ and ‘sustainable,’ none of the respondents specifically highlighted any of the elements as ‘irrelevant.’

INPUT REQUEST #2: BACKGROUND STATEMENTS

In your view, are there any Background Statements that need clarification, that should be added or that are not relevant?

Changing world

1. The world today is different from the one that existed when the Green Revolution began in the late 1960s. One of the changes is that the locus of agricultural research and development has shifted dramatically from the public to the private multinational sector. However, private sector research pays minimal attention to many crops cultivated by the world's poor. These farming systems require different research approaches, including broader-ranging public goods produced by this research, beyond just improved crops.

There were 6 responses to Background Statement 1.

- One respondent thought the whole Statement **unclear**, while another thought the second (final) sentence was unclear.
- Two respondents queried the use of the Green Revolution as a baseline.
- Suggested **additions** to this Statement were:
 - *and the priorities of the most marginalized poor.*
 - The need to look at the institutional conditions necessary to enable the poor to access farm and off-farm work opportunities.
 - The 'huge change' in the dismantling of state agricultural support (e.g. credit, marketing boards, extension).
 - The role of civil society.

Changing world

2. The agriculture sector has also increased in complexity causing need for the research to expand its horizon beyond traditional disciplinary areas. This condition has caused agricultural research to have to take more multi/inter-disciplinary approaches in order to embrace and understand this complexity.

There were 7 responses Background Statement 2.

- Two respondents sought '**clarifications**':
 - *Replace "to embrace and" with "to acknowledge, address and"*
 - *Agriculture not only produces commodities for an increasingly liberalized world market, but will increasingly be held responsible for delivering the ecological services on which human life depends. When discussing this issue in the definitions, I ... see an important opportunity here for international agricultural research.*
- Three **additions** to the Statement were proposed:
 - Clarification of the nature of the 'complexity' referred to (also applies to Background Statement 3).

- That the agricultural sector must link with non-agricultural sectors.
- That agricultural research is a *capacity-building arena articulated with markets*.
- One respondent considered that the two sentences of the Statement effectively say the same (*irrelevant*).
- One respondent suggested that agriculture has always been 'complex,' and that the argument put forward for inter/multidisciplinarity is usually that NARS already have disciplinary capacity.

Changing world

3. In order to reduce poverty, we need to understand its complexities and factors that contribute to poverty and its alleviation. These factors vary considerably in relation to their socio-economic, political and biophysical setting. Agricultural research has to include more players that operate in agricultural systems at multiple scales. Researchers and their partners in the delivery of research are learning to collaborate and to think in terms of broader systems and their inherent dynamics.

There were 7 responses to Background Statement 3.

- One **clarification** was sought re 'complexity' (see Background Statement 2, above).
- Three **additions** were proposed:
 - *there is a need to understand ... the ways poverty is perceived by and impacts on different people.*
 - That the 'factors' vary significantly over time, thereby undermining traditional experimentation with controls, and *pushing research to innovation systems and patterns approaches.*
 - 'are *at the threshold of learning to collaborate*'
- One respondent picked up on the term 'delivery of research' as key to linear technology-transfer concept, and therefore best avoided in this context (*irrelevant*).
- One respondent asked how we should know if genuine collaboration is happening.
- One respondent suggested that partnership mode (which carries transaction costs) was not essential to all agricultural research.

Changing world

4. As many political, economic and social studies of the 'Green Revolution' experiences show, there is a need to recognize the specific setting within which agricultural systems operate and, hence, in which the research is conducted. Because of the enormous diversity in agricultural systems, there is a need to understand causes of poverty in order to design effective research projects and programs, and to assess their impact.

There were 6 responses to Background Statement 4.

- One respondent noted that they do not *think* in terms of 'assessing impact,' but rather 'understanding the trajectories of change.' *It is the pathways of change that help us understand the process of development.*
- Four other **additions** were proposed:
 - That we need to understand poverty *in order to design effective research projects. Not just because of diversity in agricultural systems.*
 - *'to understand—the root—causes of poverty.'*
 - Clarification between rural and urban poverty, and causes of poverty.
 - 'environmental studies' of the Green Revolution.

Changing world – General comments

- *The section on Changing world could include issues such as climate change (mentioned at 6), bio-fuel, public goods issues related to bio-technology in the world of globalization etc.*
- *I think the \$7 billion to the CG and \$100 billion on research to developing country farmers could be put into context. How much is being invested per year per poor person? How does this compare to other areas of research investment – drugs and health care, defense, etc? In current terms \$7 billion is what one rogue trader lost in a couple weeks.*

Agricultural research for poverty alleviation

5. In 2004, some 969 million people lived on US\$ 1 or less a day. The highest share of the world's poor is in Sub-Saharan Africa (41%). The rural share of the poor is 76%.

There were 3 responses to Background Statement 5.

- One respondent asked whether there was not more recent data, and for clarification of the rural poor figure. Another thought the statement unnecessary.
- *the implication is to my opinion that we must address the way economic thinking is currently designing the world. It is obvious that the 'free world market' and the global agricultural treadmill fail in including (a) the millions of rural poor, and (b) the land and other resources they occupy, in the global human project. Inclusive development requires level playing fields and a fairer sharing of the market for agricultural products. This asks for a different kind of economics that the neo-liberal insistence on*

competition, relative advantage and other tenets. Big battle ahead! (Also applies to Background Statement 6)

Agricultural research for poverty alleviation

6. There is a growing groundswell of concern (based on scientific data) that the Millennium Development Goals (reduction to 800 million hungry, or 1.2 million income-poor by 2015) might not be met unless development is more effective. Current, unstoppable climate change may already increase the number of poor people in the world to 2 billion by 2020 (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007). A major factor in making development more effective is better understanding of processes of change.

There were 5 responses to Background Statement 6.

- Two respondents sought **clarifications**:
 - One on the 'change' referred to in the last clause in the light of the fact that the only change referred to in the Statement is climate change.
 - *Both understanding climate change and building strategies to adapt needs to be more explicit in our statement that leads to the Dialogue process.*
- Two **additions** were requested:
 - *I would first give an impression that with all the successes in agriculture we failed to reduce poverty. The rate of poverty growth has been reduced gradually but not the absolute number. I will argue that we failed to ensure public good nature of the agricultural technologies for the poor to the extent all of us would hope for. I would give more emphasis on to act rather than only understanding as in para 6.*
 - The role of participatory research in this (2 respondents).
- One respondent highlighted the importance of strategies to adapt to 'unstoppable' climate change.
- One respondent said that 'scientific data' suggests a certain rigor and quality that might not be found in this case, and suggested using *terminology that avoids mystification and reification*.

Agricultural research for poverty alleviation

7. The international community has invested approximately US\$ 100 billion dollars over the last 30 years on research to serve the developing country farmers. Of this total, US\$7 billion has been conducted by the CGIAR. This fact has played a significant role in the whole impact assessment effort by research agencies and their donors who ask whether resources of this magnitude have been properly invested and are making a difference.

There were 4 responses Background Statement 7.

- *Very relevant!*
- Two **clarifications** were requested:
 - Replacing 'properly' with 'wisely and appropriately' in the final sentence.
 - To show the proportion of international investment that has reached farmers and the proportion that has ended up in the investors' pockets.

- One respondent requested that the figures be verified as the CG data is old (ca.2002) and the global figure may be too high.

Agricultural research for poverty alleviation

8. The concept of poverty and the belief in technological solutions to address rural poverty have changed. The current definition of poverty goes beyond income and includes such things as access to social services and people's inability to participate in society. Furthermore some argue that the ability to learn and adapt to a changing world and the adoption of solutions that maintain the basic health of the resource base are also important factors. There are several frameworks, notably the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework and Sustainability Science Framework, that provide a basis for conceptualizing and assessing poverty.

There were 4 responses to Background Statement 8.

- One respondent requested rewording of the second sentence to *'The current definition of poverty goes beyond income and includes such things as access to social services and people's ability to participate in society' (clarification)*.
- One respondent requested the **addition** of attention to institutional development.
- Two respondents queried the Statement:
 - One said the SRL framework [sic] is very weak, so perhaps not a good example. The same respondent suggested the workshop critically explore such frameworks.
 - *I am not sure about the statement that "the belief in technological solutions to address rural poverty have changed". The belief of whom? Recently, there has been much evidence regarding the efficacy of technological solutions. For what other research products do we have large scale evidence of benefits?*

Agricultural research for poverty alleviation

9. The multidimensional nature of poverty requires holistic approaches to the development of solutions that go beyond purely technological solutions. An 'innovation systems' framework provides one way for thinking about how change happens. The emphasis is on the application of knowledge — of all types and not only limited to science/research-derived knowledge — in the production of goods or services. Other applications of knowledge include — learning through interaction among actors playing new roles; supportive policy environments; institutions and markets; and demand. The major implication is that in order for scientists to have impact, scientific research be recognized as being only one 'piece of the sustainable development puzzle' and new knowledge seen as a co-creation challenge.

There were 5 responses to Background Statement 9.

- *I agree very much with this statement. It means that innovation is not the result of a linear process but the emergent process of interaction among synergistic contributions of various actors. It means not 'extension' of science beyond the walls of academia, but facilitation of that interaction process. This has implications for **understanding and measuring research impact** in terms of attention to social process indicators and to a theory of the 'pathways' of innovation. I think we have not gone very far in this understanding innovation beyond diffusion and adoption in the linear model tradition.*

- Three respondents sought **clarifications**:
 - Vis-à-vis ‘new knowledge seen as co-creation challenge.’
 - Replacing ‘solutions’ in sentence 2 with ‘contributions.’
 - Definition of the innovation systems framework, of which there are many and diverse. The same respondent suggested that *an approach which is explicitly pro-poor has yet to be articulated.*
- One respondent suggested 2 **additions**:
 - *we might want to broaden our understanding about how rural and urban poverty have been studied—what are frameworks for understanding poverty and its causes and how can they be hybridized with an innovation framework which focuses on technology, goods and services.*
 - Capacity development is one aspect of innovation systems: *the capacity of actors and the education of new generations of different types of actors.*

Understanding and measuring research impacts

10. The complexity of measuring affects on poverty reduction mirrors the complexity of defining poverty, and increases where participatory methods are used and people define their own indicators of poverty and poverty alleviation. The entire field of poverty measurement has emerged in response to the need to define targets for international agricultural research and measure progress against them. Different models of poverty imply different indicators. At the project level, scientists are often left wondering which poverty model to use.

There were 7 responses to Background Statement 10.

- Two respondents sought **clarification**—one in general
 - *Complexity theory, notably the Cynefin framework, says that indicators won’t actually be useful for certain situations. Let’s allow ourselves to diversify into narratives rather than only staring blindly at the holy grail of indicators.*
- One respondent suggested **adding** ‘different methods of assessing impact’ in relation to the requirement for different indicators.
- One respondent suggested that the second sentence could be deleted (**irrelevant**).
- Three respondents queried the Statement:
 - Has ‘the entire field of poverty measurement ... emerged in response to the need to define targets for international agricultural research and measure progress against them’? Asks one respondent; while a second says it emerged in response to a whole lot more than this need.
 - *I wonder under what conditions can agricultural and natural resource mgmt research contribute to poverty reduction. Land tenure and redistribution might be relevant, but is not a theme dealt with by IARCs.*

Understanding and measuring research impacts

11. Quantitative economic analyses that attempt to measure impact are challenging, but much progress has been made on the application of these approaches to both ex ante and ex post analyses by research institutions and partner research teams. For this Dialogue, we are interested in approaches that attempt to address issues of 'how' change comes about and 'who' benefits. This often involves both quantitative and qualitative methods, some of the quantitative approaches coming from more traditional impact assessment experience.

There were 2 responses to Background Statement 11.

- *many studies using quantitative economic analysis, do not actually measure “impact” but “adoption of technology”.*
- *it is not enough addressing “issues of “how” change comes about and “who” benefits, we also need proactively influencing the change for the poor using their approach (**addition**).*

Understanding and measuring research impacts

12. A primary objective driving many past impact studies was to 'demonstrate' impact, to show donors that their investments in research were well spent, and to build the case to mobilize additional resources. Although many rigorous studies have been carried out and positive impacts and returns found, they never seem to be enough for, or entirely convincing to, the diverse range of research investors involved. This is because many factors affect the way resources in agricultural research are allocated.

Seven respondents provided feedback Background Statement 12.

- One respondent found the last two sentences **unclear**.
- Four **additions** were requested:
 - *a disconnect in interests and expectations of investors, research implementers and benefiting stakeholders that may pan out throughout the life of a research program and make impact lessons irrelevant. These disparities have in many instances led to disillusion of stakeholder roles and strongly influenced subsequent activities, especially investment priorities.*
 - *This is because many factors affect the way resources in agricultural research are allocated and different players may choose to ignore those that they find inconvenient or challenging to their preferred perspective.*
 - *Big problem in impact assessments is that we are expected to show impact in short time-horizons, often “imposed” by donors when even the donors know that often impact takes rather longer than 2–3 years before it becomes “measurable”.*
 - *Donors want to see impact (and that is only correct) but [they] do [not] have the tools to “help” us assess impact.*
- Queries raised:
 - *The validity of the last sentence as the only reason why donors are unconvinced (2 respondents).*
 - *Who defines rigor? ... Can we discuss the notion of the values of “impact studies” based on a different understanding of the link between evidence and decision?*

Understanding and measuring research impacts

13. Attributing impact to the input of a particular organization may be misrepresenting the actual way in which much of our research is carried out today through, for example, the use of broad partnerships. Partnerships involve collaboration, negotiation and strong team-building skills. This approach aims to build capacity and encourage institutional and policy changes in search of solutions to complex sustainable poverty reduction challenges. It involves recognizing that how the research is carried out is just as important as what is done. In some cases, early feedback can indicate when specific changes in research approach are needed sooner rather than later.

There were 2 responses to the Background Statement 13.

- *It is not always feasible or desirable to attribute results to partners in collaborative research efforts, since often the actions of one partner alone would have not produced adoptable outputs without the contributions of others. Attempts to attribute credit may offend the partners involved. In such cases a viable solution is to consider and attribute collaborative efforts jointly. Identifying the application of agricultural and related research outputs may often be complex, especially in the case of research programs that do not directly produce finished tools or improved physical inputs. Good examples are the intermediate genetic research outputs of CIMMYT that are used by others but do not directly impact on livelihoods; or documents, recommendations, and policies that draw on agricultural research results but do not produce direct impacts. The impact of these can only be attributed by gathering evidence (through interviews and case studies) on the contribution they made from those involved. ...*
The CGIAR has a standard method, *yet in practice it can be used in limited occasions and is mostly inappropriate for complex partnerships, most IAs, and the reality of research.*
There is an alternative (complementary) approach, *Yet I suggest that the workshop pays a lot of effort on discussing this matter and developing methods.*
- *One should also think about the career paths of researchers and what institutions are using to validate “research”. In many cases academic publications, blue sky research is given a much higher career priority than the types of applied research often necessary in relation to pro-poor innovation. This applies to Northern and Southern institutions in many sectors.*

Understanding and measuring research impacts

14. New approaches from a range of disciplines offer possibilities for improving how we evaluate impact. There is a growing set of literature now on organizational behavior, systems thinking and analysis, outcome mapping and impact pathways, value chain analysis, action learning, institutional learning and change, pro-poor innovation and many other applications from which to draw. These new approaches could offer an improved ability to assess multiple factors and dynamic interactions in addition to our understanding of outputs and outcomes. The use of such approaches shows a shift from predominantly economic views toward examining multiple factors and their evidence as informed by systems-based analyses. Challenges to the adoption of new approaches are varied but often include a mix of political, institutional and behavioral factors.

There were 7 responses to Background Statement 14.

- One **agreed** entirely.
- CIMMYT has published guidelines with methods and approaches, including their trade-offs.
- Three **clarifications** were requested:

- One to replace the last two sentences with *The use of such approaches shows a shift from predominantly economic views to more multi-faceted views that include social, political, institutional and behavioural dimensions.*
- One for clear distinction between approaches and practices.
- *Evaluation has different objectives than research, so impact evaluation should be articulated to the development evaluation field that is now debating about how to evaluate capacities.*
- One respondent suggested the *involvement of farmers in impact assessment should feature strongly and carefully designated to document how they have benefited from a particular technology (addition).*
- *A big challenge is that multi-disciplinary approaches often do not work because each of us approaches the situation from our disciplinary (often narrow) perspective. Each of us needs to be more cross- (inter-) disciplinary so that we are better able to communicate with “others” but this is a tall order at times (education still tends to be stuck in disciplinary ruts) and there is a limit to how much each of us can be cross-disciplinary.*

Measuring and understanding research impacts – General comments

- *Generally in this section “impact assessment” is presented as a monolithic field of research while there are different types of impact assessment with different focus and methods that can be integrated to increase sustainability.*
- *Idem under impact assessment/evaluation approaches – I miss reference to “monitoring”. I find the reference to quantitative and qualitative data a bit of a red herring. All quantitative data can be made qualitative and vice versa. I think the real issue is distinguishing between contextual and non-contextual methods of data collection (Booth et al 1998).*
- *There is no mention about evaluation of outcomes and impacts on research field, I suggest to include. Important issues are also how to evaluate empowerment and social capital, in the framework of an application knowledge and learning process.*

Key events leading to this dialogue

- 15.** The agricultural research community globally is struggling with how to best increase the impact of their work on alleviating poverty. Many gatherings are being held to explore new tools, methods and understandings including those of an institutional nature. These forums have involved a diverse mixture of academics, NGOs, donors, researchers and practitioners.

There were no responses to the Background Statement 15.

Key events leading to this dialogue

16. The conference 'Why has Impact Assessment Not Made More of a Difference?' (Costa Rica, February 2002) was attended by 150 participants from CGIAR Centers, national agricultural research organizations, universities, donors and others. The participants concluded that the success of impact assessment studies could be improved in three ways: (1) by better matching impact assessment results to the needs of decision-makers; (2) by making impact assessments more credible and understandable; and (3) by improving methods for assessing a broader range of impacts beyond traditional economic measures. An important outcome of the conference was the decision to create the CGIAR Institutional Learning and Change (ILAC) Initiative in 2003. ILAC aimed initially at improving the learning and change orientation of monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment so that research could be more dynamic and make a greater contribution to poverty alleviation.

There were four responses to Background Statement 16.

- One requested **clarification** of impact-assessment improvement strategies 1 & 2.
- One suggested **addition** of *discussions the proactive initiative to influence the research management approach for pro-poor impact.*
- One suggested that the Statement was **irrelevant**, and should be replaced in its entirety *'by selecting impact assessment approaches and methods that provide the kind and quality of information that allows stakeholders to make decisions'*.
- One respondent raise a query: *What needs to be more credible and understandable in impact assessment? Is it processes of impact assessment or results of an assessment that needs to be credible and clear to various stakeholders including rural communities?*

Key events leading to this dialogue

17. The CGIAR Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis (PRGA)–CIMMYT Impact Assessment Workshop (Mexico, October 2005) revealed that a great deal of innovative research on poverty reduction and various types of social inclusion was being conducted that involved research and development partnerships and networks that worked closely with poor rural people. Key insights identified were: (1) while some planned interventions to reduce poverty and improve social inclusion (such as official policies, programs and projects) had not always had the outcomes forecast, there were within those interventions some elements that had still been effective; (2) positive changes were sometimes taking place alongside formal planned interventions; and (3) limitations with the current use of methods and tools to measure poverty and change including the theoretical assumptions behind these methods.

There were no responses to Background Statement 17.

Key events leading to this dialogue

18. The PRGA Program's third 5-year phase (2007–2011) places major emphasis on understanding processes of change in order to improve research effectiveness. In 2007, the PRGA's Advisory Board recommended that a workshop be organized to further investigate where significant poverty reduction and social inclusion has taken place. Their particular interest is in situations where CG institutions have had a technological or policy interest and to bring these lessons together in an edited proceedings for dissemination among the CGIAR and its partners. The key interest is in documenting lessons on theories of change and for the development practice.

There were 2 responses to Background Statement 18.

- One respondent suggested **adding** *due to research* at the end of the second sentence.
- One respondent asked *Are these proceedings going to be “package[d]” and “disseminated” in a way that appeals to a broader range of partners than has perhaps been the case in the past?*

Key events leading to this dialogue

19. ILAC's objectives have broadened in its new phase (2007–2011) to include research, methodology development and capacity development to increase our understanding of agricultural change processes and to increase the effectiveness of interventions to stimulate innovation for poverty alleviation. This new phase is longer term and better funded than in the past. This will provide new opportunities to address issues that were identified in earlier phases in a more substantial way.

There were no responses to Background Statement 19.

Key events leading to this dialogue

20. The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) has recently launched an “Innovation Works” initiative that aims to mobilize cross-cutting teams that take on challenges that will help ILRI and its partners dramatically improve their performance by building capacity to collaborate, innovate and integrate. Applying disciplined thinking and processes, Innovation Works helps bring about new forms of experimentation and organizational learning. It also wants to mainstream important cross-cutting challenges such as linking knowledge with action, assessing outcomes and impacts from diverse perspectives, and addressing equity and sustainability issues early on in the research and outreach work.

There were no responses to Background Statement 20.

Key events leading to this dialogue

21. The PRGA Program, ILAC Initiative and ILRI's Innovation Works Initiative have complementary objectives for promoting research for poverty reduction. They have therefore come together to co-sponsor the workshop in Cali.

There were 2 responses to the Background Statement 21.

- One respondent suggested **adding** the names of the Centers ‘integrated into’ the PRGA Program and the ILAC Initiative, with a note as to how effective the integration is at organizational level.
- *One additional challenge when working in the area of poverty is the gender issue. Is it going to be approached during the workshop? Maybe in the case studies with lessons learned.*

Key events leading to this dialogue – General comments

There were 2 general feedback comments in relation to Key events.

- One respondent asked whether SPIA initiatives, and the latest *World Development Report* were not key events (**addition**).

Workshop Themes

22. The Workshop will be organized around three cross-cutting themes. Over the course of the Dialogue and Workshop, we will be open to incorporating other themes as they arise. For the moment the three themes are described as follows.

Case studies with lessons learned in relation to, or that provide empirical evidence of, reductions in poverty, positive changes in social inclusion or equity, and analysis of how those changes happened, with a focus on one or more of the following: (a) System dynamics; (b) Roles of different players; (c) Innovation and markets; (d) Research-to-development processes; and (e) Learning processes as they affect actor behavior.

Impact assessment and evaluation approaches that address issues such as: (a) Assessing contributions in complex partnerships; (b) Interdisciplinary research; (c) Combining quantitative and qualitative data; (d) Linking the contribution of processes to outcomes and impact; (e) Innovation systems analysis and new metrics for understanding and measuring outcomes and impacts.

Institutionalization of new approaches for research management and impact assessment: (a) Communication lessons; (b) Training and capacity development for poverty-oriented research and impact assessment; (c) Policy and operational environments (including institutional culture).

There were 6 responses to Background Statement 22.

- The majority of responses were to do with **additions**:
 - Add ‘*scaling up*’ and ‘*empowerment of different players, their roles and social networks*’ to ‘Case studies’
 - Also ask those presenting case studies *to spell out the methodology they used ... to understand how to understand poverty.*
 - Add ‘*uses and users of impact assessment*’ to ‘Impact assessment and evaluation approaches’
 - Add ‘*institutional learning processes and knowledge sharing*’ to ‘Innovation of new approaches’
 - Add focus on institutions (‘rules that reduce uncertainty in human interaction’)
 - Add focus on *what the case studies say about our understanding of the nature of poverty, the poor and their context.*
 - *when should impact assessment be done in the process from research to development. ... it might also be useful to discuss the role of impact assessment ex post when the ex ante and other priority setting exercises are not very explicit. This is central to looking at the efficiency of resource use. There may have been a positive impact for a technology, but that does not mean that the investment was the most effective. What other alternatives were available for the same research investments?*
- *Institutionalization ... b. : “Training and capacity ... impact assessment” around a pro-poor research management approach expected to be more useful.*

Background Statements – General feedback

Thirteen respondents provided general comments about the Background Statements as a whole.

- Six respondents were generally happy with the coverage Background Statements

- *I think that is important to use multidimensional and integrated methods. The reality today is independent evaluations and use of different approaches. This integration is very important for the future of the IA in agricultural research.*
- One respondent sought '**clarification**,' or rather explicit recognition of '*the changes needed to incorporate discussion on knowledge*'
- The vast majority of the general feedback concerned **additional statements and elements**:
 - Emphasize *evaluation for learning, and adapting*
 - Frameworks to help guide the institutionalization process
 - Farmer-based research
 - Conceptual translation (into other languages) of terms defined
 - Political will
 - *How the international community and those who are wealthy can reduce our demands on ... natural resources to give others a chance to meet their basic needs. Ethical discussions... e.g. climate change, our responsibility*
 - Resource health: *why poor farmers are in the position of ... destroying their base to supply basic needs when others ... utilize resources without care ... The poor should not have their options limited by environmental concerns unless we are prepared to ... compensate*
 - *a background statement that acknowledges that a key driver of what is generally seen as "best practice" will be the outcome of a paradigm war in evaluation between experimental evaluation, which uses controls, and other types of evaluation, such as realistic evaluation, that strive to understand what works where. This battle looks set to intensify with the Gates Foundation throwing its lot in with the former, and European Evaluators and the Network of Networks on Impact Evaluation (NONIE) taking the latter position. Experimental Evaluation seeks to remove context from the analysis by making sure the control group come from similar contexts to the treatment.*
 - Conception of knowledge, under 'Changing world'
 - Large-scale farming—stress, suicide, globalization—context cannot be ignored
 - Debates on 'Farmer First' have influenced many researchers, under 'Key events'
 - *The structural adjustment program that led to liberalization of goods (farm inputs) and services has led to creation of poverty cycles in Sub-Saharan Africa. Technological innovations alone cannot break such cycles unless they are accompanied by other strategies to enable the farmers regain production.*
 - Past agricultural research interventions have been mainly donor-driven, leaving little room for tailoring to clients' demands
 - *Decentralization initiatives in some developing countries are on the increase and it is intended to transfer resources, power and responsibilities to local authorities. This development is accompanied by capacity building and other empowerment initiatives to enhance the capacity of local authorities to demand and pay for research*

- *The “Key events leading to this dialogue” section seems somewhat out of place. Interesting background, but rather different from the background challenges of the other important general issues preceding.*

INPUT REQUEST #3: EXPECTED OUTCOMES

What outcomes do you have for this Challenge Dialogue (as in..."I would consider this Dialogue and Workshop a success if...")?

1. Learning about new frameworks for understanding the role of science, technology and innovation in poverty reduction and social inclusion drawn from case studies and other experiences. [Theme: Practical case studies with lessons learned]
2. Increased understanding of impact assessment approaches, methods and metrics that deliver empirical evidence of the effectiveness of research processes in contributing to poverty reduction. [Theme: Impact assessment and evaluation approaches]
3. Increased understanding about institutionalizing new methods and approaches for research or impact assessment. [Theme: Institutionalization of new approaches]
4. Plans are developed (either by organizations, groups of participants, or individuals) to go forward. These could include:
 - a. production of publications and other methods of distributing findings and implications of the workshop,
 - b. joint projects,
 - c. creation of, or joining existing networks, and
 - d. plans to change your own personal behavior or actions (e.g., introduction of new methods into your own workplace based on learnings from this Dialogue and Workshop. [Theme: Institutionalization of new approaches]

1. Learning about new frameworks for understanding the role of science and technology in poverty reduction and social inclusion drawn from case studies and other experiences. [Theme: Practical case studies with lessons learned]

No specific responses were received concerning Expected Output 1.

2. Increased understanding about impact assessment approaches, methods and metrics that deliver empirical evidence of effectiveness of research processes in contributing to poverty reduction. [Theme: Impact assessment and evaluation approaches]

Four respondents commented on Expected Output 2.

- One simply agreed with the Outcome.
- 3 **additions** were suggested:
 - *Increased willingness to engage in cross-disciplinary approaches to assess impacts.*
 - *Increased willingness to engage in participatory approaches to assess impacts in which stakeholders behave as peers.*
 - *...and understanding of how it happened.*
- One commented that 1 and 2 were similar, suggesting focus on #2, *as specific methods that have been applied to identify the causal effects of research are probably more valuable than are general frameworks.*

3. Increased understanding about institutionalizing new methods and approaches for research or impact assessment. [Theme: Institutionalization of new approaches]

There were no specific responses to Expected Output 3.

4. Plans are developed (either by organizations, groups of participants, or individuals) to go forward. [Theme: Institutionalization of new approaches]

There were 5 responses to Expected Output 4.

- Three (3) agreed with 4a; three (3) with 4b; two (2) with 4c, and one (1) with 4d
- One respondent **disagreed** with 4d, citing insufficient time:
 - *What we could achieve in this workshop is to learn some of the ways to appreciate alternative perspectives and avoid 'autobiographic syndrome' of writing our own progress on participatory research. Are there publications that reports failures of our own work or at least a critical assessment? I suggest the workshop facilitators keep eyes open throughout the workshop if presenters who are reporting an assessment of their own work report both success and failure stories.*
- One queried 4d: *is there technical or otherwise support that the participants will receive from organizers?*
- *Would be good to have a workshop proceedings of the full paper as a reviewed document for ease of use and referencing.*

Expected Outcomes – General feedback

Twenty-four (4) respondents provided general feedback on the Expected Outcomes, mostly in the form of **additional** 'measures of workshop success.'

Additional measures of workshop success

- Guidelines (4): General (2), for approaches to poverty reduction (1), and for evaluation and impact assessment of approaches and impact (2)
- Create network (4): for ongoing collaboration (1), to explore *the methodological implications of ... complexity theory and challenge funding agencies with their insights* (1), to develop *strategic guidelines for carrying out evaluation in the CGIAR* (1), and for *discussing the issues of knowledge, relations on science and democracy, steps towards policy dialogues with stakeholders* (1)
- Practical institutionalization (3): how to feed back to farmers (1), new methods and approaches *vis-à-vis* organizations' reluctance to change (1), and of impact assessment (1)
- Increased understanding of change dynamics
- Identified roles of inputs and outcomes
- New ways of thinking about impact *per se* (i.e. not just 'impact assessment')
- Core presuppositions articulated and discussed

- Clarity re farmer-based science and science-driven research, and their linkages
- Each participant re-examines their own stance
- Facilitation is through heart and body, not just intellect
- We keep the poor in sight, i.e. real people with real problems
- Means for sensitizing research(ers)
- Agreement on how to deal with poverty diversity
- Increased understanding of research management for pro-poor
- Discussion of what pro-poor innovation framework might look like
- Identify how poor can be productive participants in co-generation and use
- Thinking reaches a wide audience, especially policy- and decision-makers
- Farmers involved
- Increased understanding of impact assessment for poverty reduction
- Identify the best goals (roles) for international research *vis-à-vis* other 'instruments'
- Priority-setting needs *more that insights from past research*
- Improve the way the CG does its business
- Strategy for dissemination and use of impact assessment results
- Limitations of frameworks discussed and recommendations made on overcoming them

General comments

- *After reviewing the 4 outcomes, they look more as workshop outputs than outcomes to me. For example "increased understanding" appears to be possible by just participating at the workshop. In that case it would be an output. Maybe is necessary to review those outcomes?*
- *There have been many workshops on "impact assessment", and I thought this next workshop is unique in its attempt to step back and rethink "impact". After all, we cannot successfully assess something that we (jointly) don't clearly understand. Isn't this the reason why the workshop title is on "impact" and not "impact assessment"?*
- *It may be difficult to meaningfully generalize about "institutionalization" as there is no one-size-fits-all solution for implementation.*

Queries / clarifications

- *I find the outcomes are vague – 'learning about', 'increased understanding about'. Can this be more specific and challenging please?*
- *With respect to the latter, who are the decision-makers? Will we have time to discuss how best to tailor outputs to different decision-makers because they are not a homogenous group?*
- *there are often tradeoffs between efficiency and equity, and many empirical analyses suggest that such research more effectively contributes to poverty alleviation if it is targeted towards efficiency objectives. Do the participants have any comparable evidence to suggest that this analysis is incorrect? What evidence do the conference papers have to assess whether IPG oriented research is an efficient instrument to promote equity or social inclusion?*

Planning Team's Reflections on Expected Outcomes Feedback

Many participants felt that the dialogue and workshop would be a success if one or more of the stated outcomes was achieved. Several participants particularly wanted to see plans developed for production of publications and for widely distributing the findings and implications of the workshop. Some participants felt that the learning/increased understanding outcomes were quite easy and that they would like to see us strive for something 'more specific and challenging'.

Suggested outcomes/actions (with number of participants mentioning them in brackets) can be grouped (although they often overlap) as follows:

- Identification of new ways of thinking about impact; development of lessons and/or strategic guidelines for researchers/practitioners addressing the broader aspects of sustainable poverty reduction (5)
- Identification of strategies/ways of reaching rural poor communities & decision makers with new knowledge; 'ways in which the poor can participate in co-generation and utilization of scientific knowledge'; how to link the contribution of processes to outcomes and impact (6)
- Strategies/plans for pushing forward on methods – e.g. developing new research taking a 'complex systems approach'; applying 'complexity theory'; developing/applying/testing a 'pro-poor innovation systems framework' – although no-one stated it is as such, this could be in the form of specific proposals (3)
- Compilation of practical ways of/strategies towards institutionalizing new methods and approaches within research organizations (with funding organizations also mentioned). Related to this, several participants mentioned pulling together lessons/strategies for using IA for learning and priority setting (5)
- New coalitions/networks developed around the ideas of linking knowledge with action (3)
- Compilation of failures/gaps; evidence of whether IPG-oriented research is an efficient instrument to promote equity versus social inclusion (3)

Implications for workshop structure:

1. Three Sessions on strategies – Some strategies that seem to help link knowledge with action are suggested in section 7.1 of the CP. Would turning those into guidelines help? What would these guidelines look like? What to include/exclude? How could we make them more widely useful? Similarly for section 7.2 re: evaluation and impact assessment strategies. And for section 7.3 re: strategies for insitutionalizing some of these positive approaches.
2. Session on plans for pushing forward re:-methods. For example, how best to move forward on some joint research proposals in this area?
3. Session on a 'linking knowledge with action' coalition/network/community of practice. This would focus on what we could do as a community that we cannot do as individuals/organizations. So what would this look like? Objectives of such a group?

INPUT REQUEST #4: ASSUMPTIONS

Which assumptions require more clarification for you to understand? Do you strongly disagree with any of these assumptions? What assumptions, if any, would you add to the list?

1. The multidimensional nature of poverty, social inclusion and equity requires holistic approaches to the development of interventions and to the subsequent assessment of impacts. It is our contention that agricultural and natural resources research can contribute to more positive outcomes if we improve our understanding of how change comes about and who benefits from it.

There were 7 responses to the first Assumption.

- One respondent **disagreed** with the Assumption: *Understanding of the broader context is necessary for assessing impact, but innovations do not need to address all problems simultaneously to be adoptable and beneficial.*
- Two respondents sought **clarification**:
 - One that 'positive outcomes' takes a social welfare perspective
 - One respondent suggested splitting the two sentences of Assumption 1 into two Assumptions
- Three **additions** to the Assumption were suggested:
 - *we need to understand not only the nature of change, but also the nature of poverty.*
 - *The research/development community—are we prepared to hear the lessons and act on them especially if they are uncomfortable for us?*
 - *A greater need for openness to change from other environments outside the access of formal establishments could be sources of learning.*
- *improving our understanding of change processes is just a beginning, but an assumption statement like this more beyond this. We understand how smoking harms us but quitting the habit needs a lot more effort and commitment.*

2. Within this Dialogue and Workshop, we are assuming that we can achieve useful clarity and alignment among the participants on:
 - a. the use of empirically based methods for creating theory and practice in different academic disciplines, and the use of relevant qualitative and quantitative tools by different disciplines;
 - b. the special concern for the production and use of public goods relating to poverty reduction, social inclusion and equity of the rural poor.

There were 4 responses to the second Assumption.

- One respondent **disagreed** with the Assumption—*it would be necessary to have products at the workshop which will lead us to that [clarity and alignment].*
- Two respondents sought **clarifications**:

- Both felt that 2b was unclear
- One asked, *do we have sufficient representation at the workshop from other disciplines?*
- One respondent requested the **addition** of ‘and urban’ to 2b.

3. A preparedness of participants for the Dialogue and Workshop to:
- a. listen and learn and potentially change their behavior;
 - b. provide empirical evidence (qualitative or quantitative) that supports any statements concerning the effectiveness (and possible relevance to other situations) of any new (or old) tool, method or framework.

There were 3 responses to the third Assumption.

- Two respondents sought **clarification** of the Assumption:
 - *behavioral change is not a linear process.*
- **Add** the participant’s organization, which might also want to change its behavior—what can the participant do to help?

4. There is recognition that ‘assessing impact’ of past planned research and other interventions requires a wide range of skills, methods, etc., from a wide range of disciplines and experiences.

Only 1 response was received to the fourth Assumption.

- *In assessing impact we should also assume that the scientists interests/objectives are not in conflict with the farmers needs/interests.*

5. There will be a belief among Dialogue and Workshop participants concerned with agriculture and natural resources, that ‘opening up’ the discourse to knowledgeable and skeptical ‘outsiders’ increases the chances that R&D resources will not be wasted.

There were 5 responses to the fifth Assumption.

- Two respondents sought **clarification** of the Assumption.
- Three respondents supported the Assumption
 - *This is a key point and needs to be emphasized in the workshop.*

Assumptions – General comments

General feedback on the Assumptions was received from 15 respondents.

- 6 respondents were generally happy with the Assumptions.
- **Clarifications** were sought:
 - Who is referred to by ‘we’ and ‘our’?

- The purpose of the Assumptions.
- There were 6 proposed **additions** to the list of Assumptions:
 - *the workshop can take “impact” as a useful starting point for discussion, but at the same time it opens up to diverse (and perhaps radical) views*
 - *Poverty, social inclusion and equity requires holistic approaches, for that we need to focus on the CGIAR poverty eradication target. To fulfill the CGIAR objectives we should understand the causes and how it can be eradicate.*
 - *Listening to community: Monitoring and evaluation process must open up new opportunities through which people can make their voices heard.*
 - *Participatory and inclusive: Approach and methodology used for assessing and learning from change should be participatory, inclusive, and in tune with the views and aspirations of those most directly affected.*
 - *the multidimensional dimensions of the impacts require multidimensional methodological approaches.*
 - *[The] CGIAR will put in place mechanisms to ensure that the NARS and other research institutions are committed to impact oriented research and adopt frameworks and approaches that serve the poor.*
- Three other comments were made:
 - *During the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) we found the following assumptions to lead to great controversy, also among the scientists:*
 1. *Agriculture is multi-functional in that it produces not only commodities but increasingly also the ecological services on which we depend;*
 2. *Agricultural research is not only about technology, but also about institutional change;*
 3. *Genomics is not the (only or most promising) answer to poverty;*
 4. *Markets and trade are key concerns for reaching development and sustainability goals and have to be part of any consideration of S&T for reaching those goals;*
 5. *Relative advantage is not an economic truth on which to build global society: it leads to great inequity and unfair trade, and underpins sloping playing fields.*

One comes away from the IAASTD experience feeling that new International Public Goods are slowly emerging (and replacing the old pervasive concern with wealth creation). But it is not all certain whether the entrenched interests in wealth creation can be brought around to support the new IPGs.
 - *In general I wonder if there are assumptions about agricultural research which we are making in relation to poverty. What kinds of research are needed to deal with poverty and what is the role of research by CGIAR in relation to that whole body of other research.*
 - *The assumption statements seem to imply that change is always positive and desirable. In real sense, change can be negative and there are a lot of trade offs to change.*

INPUT REQUEST #5: INITIAL QUESTIONS TO STIMULATE THE DIALOGUE

Which propositions or aspects of the propositions do you agree with?

Initial Propositions 7.1 Regarding Linking Research with Action (for sustainable poverty reduction and social inclusion)

7.1.1 Problem definition proposition – successful research requires dialogue and cooperation between those who produce knowledge and the decision-makers who use it. It is especially important that the problem to be solved be defined in a collaborative, but ultimately user-driven, manner.

There were 9 responses regarding this proposition. Three agreed (with two of them asking ‘*who the decision makers are*’), and the rest questioned the distinction/assumption that producers and users of knowledge are always separate (‘*users and producers of knowledge can be the same, particularly in the case of the rural poor*’).

7.1.2 Research management proposition – successful research generally adopts a ‘project’ orientation and organization, with dynamic leaders accountable for achieving user-driven goals and targets. They avoid the pitfall of letting ‘study of the problem’ displace ‘creation of solutions’ as the research goal.

This proposition generated 7 responses. One disagreed, one would reword, and five agreed, with the following additions:

- *The wording ... needs to be revisited. “successful research generally adopts a “project” orientation and organization.” Does this imply programmatic research is not successful? In my view, the opposite is the case – that research management linked to long-term programs are more likely to be successful than short-term projects.*
- Poverty reduction impacts require going beyond a single project, linking a combination of projects
- Require ‘flexible’ approaches
- *The “study the problem stage” can sometimes be bypassed by collaboration with the people who know the problem and context*
- *there may need to be a place in a research portfolio for ‘blue sky research’ that does not have immediate application but which ultimately prove to be significant. The description also needs to acknowledge that sometimes research finds that something does NOT work – which is not usually the goal or target of the research.*
- *The research initiatives need to be effectively linked to broader long term social, institutional, organizational, and /or entrepreneurship processes.*

7.1.3 Program organizations proposition – successful research includes ‘boundary work or actions’ committed to building bridges between the research community on the one hand and the user community on the other, and creates networks that allow interaction among the different users and producers. This boundary work often involves constructing new informal arenas, in which project managers can foster user–producer dialogues, joint product definition, and a systems approach free from distorting dominance by groups committed to the status quo. A key step is to define joint ‘rules

of engagement' in the new arena that encourage mutual respect, co-creation and innovation that addresses complex problems, while recognizing that—in order to implement changes—each partner is answerable, and has to return, to their institutional 'homes' and the cultural norms, rules, constraints, etc., that go along with them.

One respondent thought this was an important proposition. The other 3 respondents added:

- Need clarification of who is the research community and who is the user community
- *Agree, but working in this way presents a massive challenge!*
- *The champions should be able to challenge their institution's 'home' and cultural norms, rules and constraints for desired change*

7.1.4 Systems approach proposition – successful research takes a systems approach that recognizes scientific research is just one 'piece of the puzzle,' and aims to identify and engage with key partners that can help turn co-created knowledge generated by the project/program into action (new strategies, policies, interventions, technologies) leading to better and more sustainable livelihoods.

Eight responses, with 2 disagreements:

- Suggesting changing the metaphor of research being one piece of the puzzle to scientific research being *one tire of a car which hopefully is going on the direction of contributing to better and more sustainable livelihoods.*
- An assertion *that there are divergent ways of systems thinking, and that oftentimes it is the traditional "hard systems view that hinders innovation."*

And 6 agreements (one 'spot on'), with the following additional thoughts:

- *There may be other aspects of a systems approach that would add value to conceptualizing research, including specific attention to boundaries and perspectives and to bi-directional causality.*
- Need to *plan research such that dissemination starts simultaneously with research and not waiting for final results*

7.1.5 Learning orientation approach proposition – successful research occurs in systems designed for learning rather than systems for knowing. Recognizing the difficulty of their task, such programs are frankly experimental—expecting and embracing failure in order to learn from it as quickly as possible. Success requires appropriate reward and incentive systems for risk-taking managers, funding mechanisms that enable such risk-taking, and periodic external evaluation.

All 5 respondents agreed with this proposition, adding the following:

- *The importance of developing and supporting an appropriate incentive system for evaluation*
- *Institutions seldom fully support such a learning orientation*
- *Institutions also need to support explicit adaptive management frameworks, where learning can lead to change (top down management structures need to go!)*

- *The rewards and incentives for risk taking managers very important*

7.1.6 Continuity and flexibility proposition – successful research develops strategies that focus on strengthening linkages and effective patterns of interactions between organizations and individuals operating in the locality where the impact is sought. A key role of boundary-spanning work/organizations is the facilitation of processes that create strong networks and build innovation/response capacity of the system. Co-created communication strategies and boundary objects/products are key to the longevity and sustainability of project outcomes and impacts.

The three respondents agreed and added:

- It is not enough to *'take measures to unend power inequities'*; this must occur.
- *Flexibility is key, and it encourages individual researchers to be more innovative and open to change.*

7.1.7 Asymmetries of power proposition – successful research uses strategies to deal with the often large (and largely hidden) asymmetries of power felt by stakeholders.

This proposition resonated positively with the five respondents, who added:

- *Not only are asymmetries of power often hidden, there is often an unwillingness to even acknowledge that they exist. Indeed there may be a tacit agreement to ignore them by both the powerful (for fear of losing power) and the powerless (for fear of retribution).*
- *Another important asymmetry of power is between the researchers themselves: from senior researcher, to field technician, research assistant, student.*
- *There is a strong requirement for user-driven work to include a clear articulation around helping those that are the losers in asymmetrical power relations. It isn't enough for people to say that users should articulate their demands if you don't even know that this is possible in a given context.*
- *Managers have a key role to play here.*

7.1.8 Characteristics of people proposition – successful research requires individuals that believe in the power of teams and are innovators able to span boundaries between diverse parties. It also requires understanding of the behavior of individual actors who appear to have been effective in bringing about positive changes (positive as regards the public goods concerning social inclusion, equity, poverty reduction).

Six people responded to this, saying:

- *Capacity building is also important to develop individuals so that they can really do it with skill.*
- *This is ideal, but tough, given the 'struggle and competition for data and publications'*
- *Stresses the importance of promoting and recognizing the 'soft-skills' needed for working effectively with the diverse range of 'people' in change processes*
- *It is also important to accept that there are individuals who work in teams in different ways. Flexibility in teamwork key.*

- This proposition seems like a 'bit of a mixed bag'; am not sure I understand
- Add: Individuals who in addition to applying in-depth skills in a certain discipline are also able to apply lessons learned

7.1.9 Broad framework proposition – lessons and generalizations for future research and development interventions from past science and technology activities can be misleading or unhelpful unless they are analyzed in a framework that adequately conceptualizes past activities in their historical, political, economic and cultural contexts. This especially relates to institutional innovation concerning social inclusion, equity, economic poverty reduction and development sustainability.

One respondent disagreed with this proposition; the other 2 respondents felt that:

- *Although past research and lessons should not be copy-pasted, they should be looked at as a starting point to generate ideas and to avoid past mistakes. Literature about past projects has been mentioning lack of social inclusion, equity, etc. for many decades and still many researches do not seem to learn from it.*
- **Lessons** need to be specific enough to be practically useful, yet broad enough to be effectively applied across diverse environments/sectors.

General comments about the 9 propositions included in section 7.1

Four respondents agreed with most of these propositions, and one suggested they all need substantiation with empirical evidence. Others added:

- These propositions *need to include not just linking knowledge to action but to impact as well*
- *Some might believe research 'successful' if it leads to a publication in 'Nature'. Others might want to see proof that poverty has been reduced as a result of it. I believe this is going to be an important issue at the Workshop. For example, if 'success' includes some evidence of the research having led to innovation at the farm and/or policy level, this has a great many implications for methodology, the nature of research projects, funding, impact assessment, etc.*
- *Linking knowledge with action is the cornerstone of impact monitoring and evaluation. This also forms the basis of applied research.*
- *Re: effectiveness of research. How do we know that we have used our research budget in the most effective way? What was the ex ante analysis? Is research in one area more useful than research in another area? A positive impact is better than a negative impact, but how do we know if another approach might have yielded even more positive impact.*
- *I think we might develop a proposition on how propitious the context for change and larger impact is. This is important in power asymmetries, e.g. and might suggest only working where asymmetries are lower and change is already beginning, or where the problem is big enough and generalizable enough that lessons can be applied from one place to another.*

Initial Propositions 7.2 Regarding Impact Assessment and Evaluation Approaches

7.2.1 It is crucial to clarify the purpose and focus of the assessment, as different potential “users” frequently have very different concerns (e.g. investors may want to know the returns on their investments, while implementers want to improve performance), and different methods may be needed to respond to different questions.

Six responses. One respondent disagreed. Points of clarification requested:

- How [the] return on investment can be maximized without improving performance; and why the purpose and focus of the assessment should be different (and that use of different methods will address this issue).
- Responsibilities of different actors in any assessment.
- Ongoing refining of purpose as this is not static. (from ‘General responses to section 7.2.’)

7.2.2 Involvement of intended users in assessment process. Ideally, the intended users of the assessment are included from the outset, helping to develop the overall approach.

One agreement and two caveats that it depends on the purpose of the assessment, and that it is more than just the intended users (e.g. those paying for the assessment), but wider stakeholder group that has to be included. A fourth respondent added:

- *This is a bit tricky, though we strive to do this. This assumes that we have taken steps to define how an innovation will be put to use, and thus define – more or less – a user group or population. However, as “intended users” interact with their communities and social networks, adaptation and innovation takes place beyond the “site”. There can be un-anticipated groups of users – whose characteristics and behaviors vary considerably from what has been anticipated. Thus, an inflexible/“insensitive” impact assessment strategy may misreport impact, as well as the innovation process. Maybe an evolving assessment process that makes adjustments for who’s in as well as who’s out, at what points during the process?*

7.2.3 Different approaches are needed to measure different types of impacts (e.g. economic, social, environmental), and impacts felt at different levels (e.g. household versus community levels). Thus, linking multiple approaches is as much of a challenge as refining existing approaches or developing new ones to fit the needs of specific assessments.

Two respondents agree this is the challenge we face!

7.2.4 There is no shortage of good evaluation and impact assessment methods available from many different fields/sectors. Making this knowledge more easily accessible and useful to potential practitioners (e.g. what methods may be more appropriate under what circumstances) remains a challenge.

Eight responses. Half disagree, quite strongly.

- *It would be useful to distinguish between different types of assessment methods – some are good at identifying different impacts that are valued, some are good at getting evidence of these impacts, some are good at analyzing causal contribution. While there are many different methods, sometimes people use a method that does one of these tasks well and do not realize they have not adequately addressed the other tasks.*
- *It could be important to mention “Triangulation of evidences with actors”*
- *I don't think that there is always an abundance of good evaluation and impact assessment methods. In some case they may be available but just too expensive and un-wieldy to use. In other cases they may not exist at all.*
- *There is still inadequacy of good evaluation / impact assessment methods available from different fields. For example in the past most poverty impact assessment studies used mainly income and consumption as the main indicators for measure income poverty. They have not used methods to disaggregate poverty by social groups. Further work is needed to develop, discuss and agree on the good evaluation /impact assessments methods for complex partnership research projects. (From 'All propositions in Section 7 – General Comments.')*

7.2.5 Optimal use of assessment results is strongly related to the assessment process and involvement of potential users in it. Good processes involve thinking carefully through the use issues (who, why, how, when and where) right from the beginning of the assessment.

Five respondents agree and add the following:

- *Users' understanding of their needs... evolve over time*
- *A missing element is the quality of the evidence itself and how this can made clearer. There are lessons from the health sector here in relation to making estimates of the quality of the evidence e.g. probably causal link, limited suggestive evidence of a link etc. This would help in relation to policy influencing relationships when often major policy changes are advocated on the basis of limited evidence that is 'over-egged'*
- *Use and communication of results. Communication as a way to learn with different stakeholders.*
- *there is a limit to the extent that information can influence policy decisions as this is also a matter of personality, chance/luck, who is considered part of the in-crowd, timing, etc. (from 'General responses to section 7.2.')*

7.2.6 Power issues. Power dynamics between the assessors/evaluators and those responsible for the intervention matter, and measures may need to be taken to address power imbalances to meet the goals of the assessment.

Five responses. One 'I don't understand'; one 'unclear – who needs to take measures to address power imbalances?'; one agree. The others add:

- *Unequal power dynamics often lead to inefficient use of the results of the IA.*
- *The tension may be between at least three parties, not just two – the assessors/evaluators, the implementers and the funder of the evaluation (and the funder of the R&D work if different). Funders of evaluations may scope the evaluation in such a way as to curb its ability to illuminate areas that the funder would prefer to be kept obscure.*

7.2.7 Attribution issues. Attribution is always a tricky issue in impact assessment efforts. Research designs can focus on before–after, or with–without intervention comparisons, for example, in an effort to measure impacts and attribute them to particular investments or efforts of a particular organization or group. However, attributing impacts in multi-partner contexts can actually be detrimental to partnerships. It may be more important to be able to measure and document diverse outcomes and impacts than to attempt to ‘parcel out’ attributions to any particular organizations or investments.

This proposition obviously hit a chord with many, as 10 people responded to it. Many agreed with it, and several mentioned the complexity of the issue, the fact that we are ‘*between a rock and a hard place*’ and the need to ‘*unbundle*’ the different issues. One respondent took exception to the suggestion that attributing impacts in multi-partner contexts can actually be “*detrimental to partnerships*”. Another respondent pointed out the disconnect between the pressure from some funders to work in broad partnerships, and the pressure from the same funders to demonstrate attribution. Others added:

- *Causal analyses that use simple before and after, or with and without, comparisons are vulnerable to several threats to validity which might be addressed through research design or through systematic search for evidence that supports alternative explanations (Mayne’s contribution analysis). It would be useful to identify two different ways in which causal contribution would be more useful than causal attribution – where the intervention is not sufficient to produce the outcome without the contribution of favourable contexts or other interventions, and where the efforts of one agency are only effective in combination with the efforts of a partner organization.*
- *Attribution is always a tricky issue in impact assessment efforts. Research designs can focus on before–after, or with–without intervention comparisons, for example, in an effort to measure impacts and attribute them to particular investments or efforts of a particular organization or group (followed by an agreement of the proposition).*
- *While partitioning of credit among partners may not always be a productive exercise, the assessment of impact requires the attribution of causality at some level.*
- *Nowadays it is accepted that we cannot talk about “attribution” but only about “contribution”.*
- *“Research designs” - there is a confusion, impact assessment or evaluation are a type of research, but they have different objectives and uses.*
- *“Parceling out” attribution may also present an opportunity to better understand the sources of success or failure, or even generate an understanding of the value of collaborations.*

General responses to section 7.2

There were an additional 15 responses to this topic in general, including the following observations:

- *Impact assessment methods and approaches have focused too much on the “post-mortem” that is the impacts of past actions. There is need to pay more attention to guiding plans to make actions to have greater impacts. This means assessing the potential impacts before the actions. How can this be done?*
- *Impact assessment using quantitative methods are increasingly becoming too “experimental.” In many projects or programs using demand-driven and/or participatory approaches the*

“experimental” approaches that require randomization become irrelevant. This workshop needs to devote some time to address this problem.

- *I gladly leave these to Irene Guijt. The criterion for ‘successful research’ is implicit in most of these points. In CoS we have used different criteria: (1) research produces something that ‘works’, i.e. the experimental intervention leads to some (desirable) change, usually in plants, animals, soils, etc., but that could also be in institutions; (2) research produces something that works AND that is appropriate to the conditions of the intended beneficiaries, be they climate, ecology, opportunity structures; (3) research produces something that works AND that is appropriate, AND that intended beneficiaries actually can and want to use, given their resources, labour, and preferences. One could add: (4) Research produces something that can be replicated, scaled out or scaled up. For (1), you can get away with station research, for (2) you need local testing and for (3) you need interactive research methods with intended beneficiaries.*
- *Would the assessment of outcomes include an elaboration of patterns of interactions and transformation linking between the ‘before’ and ‘after’ scenarios? (the essential contribution of innovation research).*
- *Ex ante assessment and priority setting need more attention. I think we might also make greater mention of when to do impact assessment, outcome evaluation and monitoring of effectiveness of project activities or other approaches to learning. Probably we are weakest in pre-project learning about poverty and poverty reduction.*
- *There could be more attention to ‘in-itinere assessments’ (not only ex-ante and ex-post). If we focus on change, the process of change is as (if not more) important as the final results. In-itinere assessments can also increase the self-reflective dimension of research and adjust it to better achieve the final goals before its completion.*
- *Unsurprisingly, we agree with all statements 7.2... All but [no.] 6 coincide in substance with those in <http://www.cimmyt.org/english/docs/manual/ia/p2.htm#fig4>, from La Rovere, R. and Dixon, J. 2007. Operational guidelines for assessing impact of agricultural research on livelihoods. Good practices from CIMMYT. Working Document, Version 2007.1.0. CIMMYT, Mexico, D.F. These in fact were developed through a process of institutionalizing IA at CIMMYT and developing guidelines, to which also ILAC participated and contributed. The only statement that we do not include is 6 (power), but recognize that this matter is important (confirmed by fieldwork) and influences the results of an IA much more than methods chosen or other aspects.*

Initial Propositions 7.3 Regarding Institutionalization of New Approaches

7.3.1 Changes in individual behaviors are often required for effectively linking knowledge generated by research with pro-poor action, or for the successful use of knowledge from impact assessments in decision-making. There are often large incentive issues and other institutional-related obstacles to such changes, and concerted efforts to address these institutional issues may be needed for sustainable poverty reduction to occur. These include things like spending more time and bringing in assistance in team-building and facilitation of teams; finding innovative approaches to fully involving users (e.g. policy-makers, community members) from project development stage.

Seven respondents replied, with 6 generally agreeing and one questioning who are the individuals that need changing, and arguing that we need to go much further in understanding (our partners') disincentives such as cultural aspects that frown on 'embracing error', constant retrenching of government staff, lack of regular/high enough salaries, etc. Other points made included:

- *I strongly agree with the point and want to flag 'Facilitation' as the key role that needs to be strongly built in the system which is not often a case.*
- *Experience working with communities indicates that patience is required to build and sustain trust – frequent feedback is important, as well as non-prescriptive approaches*
- **Add:** *Changes in the attitudes of users (poor farmers) to appreciate new innovations and participate fully in development efforts. Some farmers seem to be contented with their poor status (resist change) and view development efforts as foreign. (From 'General responses to section 7.3.')*

7.3.2 Significant changes in organizational management practices and systems are often needed in order to link research more effectively with pro-poor action or to result in more use of knowledge from impact assessments for decision-making. These include changes such rewarding the team and not just individual performance; developing new support systems and expertise needed to assist researchers working with multiple institutions and teams.

One respondent thought this proposition is unclear, while 3 others agreed, adding:

- *Organizational accountability, for instance through a governance structure such as a committee or gender advisory group, and political will e.g. through financial support and support by management, are important recipes for realizing organizational changes.*
- *Organizations need to create an environment for champions to emerge, and to nurture them. Creating organizational memory to capture best practices is also important.*

7.3.3 Policy change is needed at different levels and across different sectors if sustainable poverty reduction is to occur. Researchers have a tough time influencing pro-poor policies and need to come up with strategies to address this challenge when choosing and refining evaluation and impact assessment approaches.

Four respondents with four agreements, one 'unclear', and the following additional ideas:

- *Working at the policy level presents particular challenges, both in terms of (i) research actors crossing boundaries towards 'influencing' or even 'advocacy' (highlighting the need for innovative partnerships with civil society partners in particular) and (ii) assessing the process of change, and*

influence of research on this process, given often highly complex policy-making processes, and long time-scales between policy-influence and actual positive livelihood changes.

- *I feel that often as researchers we under-estimate what we can do vis-à-vis contributing to policy debates (see ODI's work on linking research and policy) and that we are partly to blame by thinking that our contribution is confined to producing a policy brief or something at the end of the project when actually we can do so much more. So yes we do need to come up with strategies but they may not be that complex or taxing!*
- *A new sort of communication needs to exist between policy makers or influencers and researchers. More research on how policy makers and lobbyists work and how to take advantage of their work is needed, but the issue is that this research has to be done very locally- it is hard to talk about IPGs in this context*

7.3.4 Changes in knowledge-sharing practice: Changes in inter-personal or inter-organizational relations are needed to more effectively link research with pro-poor action, or for more use to be made of knowledge from impact assessments in decision-making. These include efforts to capitalize on new technologies and approaches aimed at improving knowledge-sharing, networking, community action, and collective action.

One respondent agreed with this proposition and a second one asked 'what changes are needed?'

General responses to 7.3 – institutional and behavioral changes

There were 14 responses to the ideas captured in the propositions regarding institutional change. Three respondents agreed, with one of those asking 'who could disagree with them, and what's new?' The huge challenge of changing institutions is mentioned several times, and a belief that these propositions are not 'radical enough' to address high-level policy and institutional issues that constrain smallholders from accessing new market opportunities or credit, for example. One respondent felt that these propositions do not apply only to 'pure' research projects, and that sustainable poverty reduction, equity and social inclusion goals have to be achieved within the broader development context (e.g. research components linked closely to bigger development initiatives). Another pointed out the need for research projects to be 'embedded in the social institutional context'.

Additional feedback included the following ideas:

- *Statements here tend to mix reference to the practices of researchers, external audiences and evaluators in a somewhat unclear manner.*
- *There should be greater discussions on rewards and incentive systems that need radical change if there should be greater emphasis on poverty reduction. Current ones do not recognize team work, coalitions, joint work etc sufficiently and in many cases are biased against it.*
- *In knowledge sharing practice there needs to be more discussion on the ethics of research where the people providing knowledge (tacit or otherwise) are rarely informed on how the knowledge is packaged in other contexts. There should be a right to information by every farmer, civil society, and government official who is involved in helping the researcher in some way or the other even if there are disagreements.*
- *All these propositions refer to "changes". Would it be possible that some aspect/s of the status quo in some specific cases/contexts may actually be good to maintain, and even promote?*

- Missing is *who 'owns' the knowledge, both in a legal (IPRs) and non-legal sense*
- *There is an urgent need to understand how political interests match with sustainable poverty reduction, equity and social inclusion issues and how to make these issues politically more attractive to the elected representatives.*
- *There's an assumption that individuals and organizations are prepared and know how to put in place the propositions proposed for this workshop, as well as those included implicitly or explicitly in different assessment approaches and methods – what's needed at the individual and organizational level to bring these propositions to practice (e.g. how to effectively balance interest when defining the assessment purposes, implementation, analysis and interpreting the emerging information; how to effectively involve users to guarantee relevance of the assessment and use; how to deal with limited capacity, resources, and cultural aspects, etc.)? The level of investment, time and effort needed to create an appropriate environment and the individual conditions to put effective assessment systems in place is underestimated.*

Addition:

- *Need to include a proposition on research priority setting, such as something along the lines of: "To ensure that research is most effectively targeted to support sustainable poverty alleviation, research choices should be based on systematic and transparent analysis of the impact potential of research alternatives. To embed learning, assumptions embedded in such analysis should draw on the findings of ex post evaluation, and should provide a basis for subsequent monitoring and evaluation of project progress and mid course corrections."*

All propositions in Section 7 – General Comments

There were 25 responses to section 7 in general, with 14 aligned with most or all of the propositions. One asked 'who could implement all of this?' Another wanted to know if these were propositions or assumptions. One suggested re-ordering them would be useful. A respondent provided a useful summary:

- *The propositions generally give useful attention to the need to understand the context for the adoption of research products, the need to have management mechanisms that align research activities with insights from evaluation, the need to carefully think through dissemination mechanisms, and general issues concerning "demand driven" research and evaluation practice.*

There were a number of new propositions suggested:

- *Need to add discussion on action research and participatory methods; given criticisms of approaches becoming to action-oriented, what should be the balance between action and research, and what is the right blend of development partners?*
- *Emphasis on a 'rights-based approach' is missing*
- *Need a proposition that addresses the different ideologies of stakeholders*
- *Successful research requires the collaboration of a chain of people in different hierarchical positions within the research team. Lowerers have a larger contact to the field and the stakeholders, which allows to direct projects towards local needs and identify problems early. Uppers have more experience and publishing power, but little of no time to know or understand their stakeholders. The equal collaboration and decision making of different levels of hierarchies within research teams allows avoiding failure.*

- *Add the aspect of gender equality*
- *The mainstream assessment (M&E) protocols that guide most development initiatives, including research efforts, do not recognise that working in 'messy partnerships' on institutional transformation requires a fundamentally different conceptualisation and practice.*
- *Given the dependence of learning on diverse forms of monitoring, there is a fundamental disconnect between the rhetoric about the need for learning in development and the reality of the M&E procedures that funding agencies require.*
- *Those engaged in decision-making and policy formulation increasingly face situations where assumptions about the way the world works, such as about cause-effect, rational choice and intentional actions, are not valid, yet their tools and procedures assume these assumptions hold true (after Kurtz and Snowden 2003).*
- *Surprise is essential to expand the boundaries of understanding (after Lee 1999), yet our research processes and assessment systems are focused on confirming preconceived ideas.*

Some disagreement with certain propositions was mentioned here:

- See also 7.2.4 above.
- *Although I have agreed with most of the propositions and they sound valid to me, I remain with a feeling of who could implement all this? What type of profile is needed for the person(s) who could take care that the issues on the propositions are met...Or do they remain good wishes? What are the basic requirements under which the propositions have a chance to exist? For example on Theme 7.1 successful research has following characteristics....Do you have best practices that meet those characteristics? How did they do it? Is it possible/ What can we learn of their path to be best practices?*

INPUT REQUEST #6: NEXT STEPS

Do you have any questions about the Next Steps or are there any other comments you would like to add?

Sixteen respondents provided feedback on the Next Steps and 'other comments'—of these, 3 were broadly happy with the process to date and the Challenge Paper; 6 commented on Next Steps; 5 provided other comments; 1 made suggestions on format; and 1 raised a query.

Next Steps

- Two respondents requested space in the Workshop for debate of genuinely contentious issues.
- One asked whether the *Workshop Workbook* would be available (even in draft form) before the Workshop
- One said that the feedback and comments from the Dialogue should be shared with participants and discussed *before the actual planning for the workshop*.
- One suggested that a blog be established to discuss the impact challenges, as the Workshop will not be long enough to cover everything
- One proposed an extra '*workshop on blending qualitative and quantitative methods.*'
- *The next steps should strongly build on lessons/gaps identified in previous initiatives rather than duplicating previous efforts.*

Other comments – additional material

- *One issue that seems to be missing is the notion of identifying whether it is most useful to consider the aspects of an intervention as simple, complex or complicated - and what this might mean for impact evaluation.*
- *Re-defining partnership: It is obvious that poorest of the poor live in remote, marginal and difficult areas. If any agency or programme is interested to create impacts on the lives of disadvantaged communities, there should be a mechanism as to how to reach to them. Now, it is a time to review as to why the benefits of green revolution technologies have not reached to these rainfed, marginal and difficult environments. One should review the way technology transfer model works. In a typical CGIAR centre managed project their natural partners are the NARSs, which means the government research councils of the concerned countries. But the vital actors of the national system who are responsible for dissemination and scaling out are mostly missing. For example even governments Department of Agriculture are also not properly represented in such projects. As a ritual, some of them may be included in the project but their roles and responsibilities are very limited. Therefore to make the project genuinely inclusive the definition of the National system in the context of CGIAR and other international organizations should be refined. The definition of NARS should include government extension agencies, NGOs and other private sector organizations working on agriculture and natural resources management research and development.*
This is very important because most of the poorest of the poor people live in the remote, marginal and difficult areas, where presence of government research systems is very thin or non-existent. This is the reason why in most cases new technologies and innovations do not reach to such places.

- *Another important point is that often the mandate of research systems is not to involve in any dissemination activities; their roles are limited just up to the field verification stage at the most. This reality strongly demands active involvement of government extension, NGOs and other private organisations in a project designed to create impacts.*
- *Projects particularly designed for scaling out and managed by CGIAR system that do not involve extension agencies (GO and NGO) again result in a failure. Not involving extension agencies in a scaling out projects would mean that it is again a top-down linear approach where basic assumption would be to work on technology transfer model rather than participatory. There is again a need for change in the mindsets in terms of involving extension agencies right from the beginning of the project so that they understand about the concept of the project, develop ownership, be accountable for what has been achieved and this approach can be more sustainable.*
- *Use of participatory approaches: increasingly participatory approaches are becoming accepted but there is a great difference the way these are interpreted and used. In most cases there have been re-labeling of old practices as ‘participatory’. As every body loves the terminology “participatory” no one dares to oppose this but there are very few individuals and organizations that genuinely use participatory approaches in a true sense. This terminology has been widely distorted and greatly misused. Most mis-use has been in the form of re-labeling of business as usual to attract funds from the donor communities.
The short cut taken by many “new” believers of this approach is to re-label their activities as participatory, e.g. Front Line Demonstration (FLD) being relabeled as Participatory Varietal Selection (PVS). However, one should know that former is a researcher designed and researcher managed trial meant to demonstrate that the recommended technology is best, whereas PVS in its true sense is a researcher designed but farmer implemented under farmer level of inputs and management and meant to identify best variety or technology to the local conditions with out any intervention by the researchers. There is no comparison between the two.*
- *There exists need to improve information available about trade-offs between poverty alleviation and natural resource conservation among the rural poor.*
- *Reach out to bridge the gap between science and real problems.*
- *Strengthen existing and new organizations to promote and internalize tested and new approaches to natural resources utilization and conservation.*
- *Put research language into information and knowledge that addresses community issues some are immediate others are long term- for example land use policies and involvement of the rural poor in policy formulation processes.*

Other comments – definitions

- *Definition of institution. This definition is not clear whether institutions different from organizations. If we don’t see a clear distinction between these two, we tend to confuse ourselves. I passed through this struggle for several years, but now I am convinced that these are two different things (Please see Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance by Douglass North (2004) (Cambridge University Press). An organization is a social arrangement which provide a structure to human interaction in pursuit of collective goals, and institutions lubricate the flow of goods and services in the structure/system.*

- *The definition of innovation does not seem to be adequate. It is not only organizations, but is also individual. I also think it is important that innovation refer to goods or services which generate additional economic or social value. Perhaps this is implicit in goods and services, but the emphasis on economic or social value is important. Innovation is not discovery or experimentation, but needs to have significant economic or social value attached to it.*
- *In the case of innovation system I don't like the word network, since the word network is used in other contexts and connotes certain things for many people. Better to say "set of" and it may also be better to say "implicated in the capacity to generate new products ...". In fact, I think innovation system is really a framework for analysis of the capacity of a set of individuals, organizations, enterprises etc to resolve problems and take advantage of opportunities related to the creation of new social or economic value.*