



ICT-KM Annual Report 2008 – Rising to the Challenge...



1. Long-term objectives of the Unit:

Mission:

“The ICT-KM Program of the CGIAR aims at a CGIAR system without boundaries, an internationally distributed, unified and open knowledge “organisation”. CGIAR Centers’ staff, regardless of their location, will collaborate in science, using high capacity computing and communication. The global public goods the CGIAR manages will be safeguarded, developed and made accessible for use by all stakeholders.

Long-term objectives:

- **Strengthen system connectivity** according to current technological developments in support of both scientific & administrative communication and information exchange;
- **Improve access to and sharing of information** at the system level, including the participation of partners;
- **Improve access to and utilization of information** global public goods within the broader agricultural research for development community;
- **Develop and provide access to tools** to support collaborative work;
- **Strengthen a collaborative, learning work culture** through capacity building, tools provision, modelling and policy development;
- Obtain **economic savings through system-wide approaches** to purchasing of relevant goods and services; and
- Make the **CGIAR an international model** in the use of information and communication technologies and collaborative, open, learning-based work.

Products and deliverables for 2008

1. Technological Innovations and Efficiencies

CIO Office

- **Collective purchasing** through the CIO office in the IT area has resulted in over 3.7 million dollars in collective savings since 2003.

To **support efficiencies and innovation**, the CIO office and the CGIAR IT Managers developed a joint initiative (involving 250 staff) to explore alternatives through piloting Google applications (**Google Apps**). The CIO office has prepared **an analysis of strategic technologies** for the CGIAR in 2009, highlighting and

prioritizing future technologies to be implemented (done in light of the upcoming changes initiative at CGIAR).

EasyMTP

The CIO Office developed an application, EasyMTP, to guide and ease the completion of Medium Term Plans. As a result **11 CGIAR Centers compiled their 2009-2011 MTP using EasyMTP**, and submitted their MTPs online for Science Council review. Data and information from EasyMTP is uploaded to the CGMap application.

Second Level Connectivity (SLC):

The SLC project piloted a regional proposal to establish the feasibility and success of providing **IT regional support** to CGIAR Centers in Southern and East Africa region with considerable success. Further work on providing IT information to CGIAR staff through the use of Web2 tools is being developed

2. Communications

CIO Office

Increased and improved communication was achieved through 4 quarterly newsletters reaching over 500 subscribers and regular blogs on the website. Blog traffic has risen from 320 views in January 2008 to 1,300 in July 2008, and has received a Google pagerank5 (a very good ranking for a blog). A growing number of sites are linking to the ICT-KM program and project sites as valuable resource.

CGVlibrary

The project has **marketed its services** through 23 online seminars (**webinars**) to audiences mostly in Latin American countries. This has resulted in **167 website links and 11 blogs linking to the CGVlibrary**.

Institutional Knowledge Sharing

A **toolkit on "how to produce storymercials"** has been developed and integrated into the KS Toolkit.

Knowledge Sharing in Research

The project has been very active **blogging** with **over 40 posts made in 6 months**, and has updated and improved their **website**.

3. Improving Impact of our Work

CIO

The ICT-KM office is organizing a session on **improving access and availability to research outputs** during the CGIAR AGM in Maputo.

Online Learning Resources

A **quality assurance and management toolkit** has been developed for print and the web.

The OLR community of CGIAR training officers agreed on a standard on **quality management, assurance and metrics** for CGIAR training and education materials

Institutional Knowledge Sharing

Three pilot initiatives are introducing KS approaches into such activities as **strategic planning** (CIFOR), **research data management** (IRRI), and **research communication** (WorldFish). The revamped **wiki-format of the KS Toolkit** (<http://www.kstoolkit.org/>) has been successful as a central resource for information and space for collaboration (**10,000 visitors per month**). A **Knowledge Sharing Strategy workshop will be organized** during the AGM08. The project is leading an **evaluation of phase I activities (2004–2006)**.

Knowledge Sharing in Research

Six pilot projects are making interventions to **open access to research**:

1. ICARDA: **International Farmers' Conference**;
2. IWMI: **Learning Alliance** approach in the 'Wastewater, Agriculture and Sanitation for Poverty Alleviation' (WASPA) project;
3. CIFOR: Improving the **sharing of research priority assessment methodologies**;
4. IWMI: **improving uptake and adoption of valuable technologies and practices**;
5. IRRI: development of a Laos Rice Knowledge Bank (LRKB); and
6. The WorldFish Centre: **alternative monitoring and evaluation and impact assessment methodologies**.

4. Strengthening Champions and Communities of Practice

CIO Office

The CIO has provided continued support to the CGIAR IT Managers, the nascent CGIAR Knowledge management group and the Consortium for Spatial Information community.

Institutional Knowledge Sharing

IKS project has been giving the CGIAR Secretariat continuous support: **Change Management Process**; **CGIAR–CSO** Engagement Process; and the stakeholder engagement process during the CGIAR's 2008 **Annual General Meeting (AGM08)**.

IKS's work to strengthen the CGIAR KS community has brought new staff (from ICARDA, ILRI, ICRAF, Bioversity, and IFPRI) and partners (FARA and FAO) into IKS activities.

A **three-phase KS Workshop** combining online and face-to-face interaction has been conceived and developed which has encouraged FAO to join forces on organizing another workshop.

Enterprise Security and Business Continuity:

The project carried out **security reviews by external consultants of CG Centers in the Americas region**, and provided a **training program for IT specialists**.

5. Opening Access to Research

CIO Office

The Program developed a strategy to ensure that research outputs of the CGIAR are global public goods, what that means, and to provide a systematic method to address this. This **ICT-KM AAA framework** proposes a matrix and action checklist in which Centers can systematically analyze to what level a research output is being made global and provides input into how to increase the availability and accessibility of outputs. The ICT-KM Program, in partnership with FARA, is organizing a **session on opening access to research** during the AGM 2008.

CGMap

The CGMap application has been developed providing **one location for all CGIAR MTP information** for easy access and download, facilitating **cross search functions and analysis** while increasing transparency and accountability.

CGVlibrary

Resources available have been increased to include more than **180 online databases and over 4,000 electronic book and journal titles**, many of which are included in information quick sets developed by CGIAR research staff and their partners.

Online Learning resources

The OLR Moodle repository hosts more than 500 “learning” resources, and in the past year CGIAR staff and partners have delivered several courses through Moodle.

6. Building Partnerships: Extending our Reach

CIO

The CIO office has continued to build strong partnerships through joint workshops, training, and initiatives with FAO, GFAR, IFAD, FARA, DFID, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, CABI, CTA, UNGIWG and CIARD.

The CIO office was selected to manage a new initiative that promises to place the CGIAR’s Consortium for Spatial Information project in a strategic, leadership role in helping realize the promise of **geospatial technology in cutting poverty and hunger**. This initiative will allow the CSI to fully participate - through its network of CGIAR GIS/RS scientists - in the **design and implementation of a new program on Geospatial Technology for Agricultural Development** (dubbed “AGCommons”) to be launched through a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) currently being finalized.

Institutional Knowledge Sharing

The project developed strong partnerships through its knowledge sharing workshop with FAO.

7. An Eye on Sustainability

Program-supported initiatives have been recognized and received support from other organizations leading to greater sustainability: VASAT has become one of ICTISAT's 6 mega projects; CSI, OLR and CGVLibrary all have been included in support from the Gates Foundation and IKS has garnered support and partnership from FAO and in the future from FARA and CARE.

Proposed work program for 2009

Main goals are:

- Continue to provide ICT-KM leadership, seize economies of scale and nurture champions and communities of practice;
- Complete successfully the existing projects; and
- Identify and obtain financial support to develop and sustain three main thrusts:
 1. Knowledge sharing activities: promote and support the uptake of lessons learned through the knowledge sharing projects, both throughout the CGIAR and through the research projects.
 2. Opening Access to Research: finalize the development and promote the application of the AAA framework developed by the Program; and finalize the development and promote the use of CGMap as a tool to analyse and provide information about the CGIAR research plans.
 3. Development of a comprehensive geospatial technology platform for Africa.

Challenges: We have experienced encouraging and sustained progress in the last few years; however we continue to face a number of challenges. The most felt challenge is the short-term and relatively moderate nature of our funding. The CIO office has received the same amount annually in the last 5 years for its core activities. Additionally the new model by which our office has to 'sell' services makes the funding even more uncertain up to the very last minute. It should additionally be noted that the dollar/euro unfavourable exchange rate has forced us to reduce the number of activities. The list of activities below is very optimistic, and will largely depend on our ability to attract further funding.

Short-term funding windows lead to a continuous difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified individuals. We mostly operate through a distributed model (recruiting staff from centers and leaving them to operate from the centers). This model has its advantages: retain qualified staff in centers so they can be reabsorbed after the assignment, but has higher management overhead.

Project funding has been important and we have been able to deliver important products and effect important changes. However, recruiting qualified staff for short-term projects has at times proved challenging, with very good staff choosing to leave for new longer term opportunities while the projects were still ongoing. The management model of the system office units has also presented a number of

challenges that remain to be addressed. We hope the new corporate office will learn from these lessons.

Change management: While I believe the CGIAR change management will lead to an improved operating model, the transition period makes it difficult to take any decision that could have longer term implications. I strongly believe the ICT-KM program has a lot to contribute to the new CGIAR, and I would welcome the opportunity to participate in the design of the new Corporate office. While the change process is being finalized, we continue to work to ensure that the services our users value continue to be delivered.

Significant Outcome(s) of the Unit:

The ICT-KM Program of the CGIAR aims at a CGIAR system without boundaries, an internationally distributed, unified and open knowledge organization.

The long-term objectives of the CIO Office and ICT-KM Program (including examples of products and deliverables that contribute to each goal) are to:

- Strengthen system connectivity applying technological innovations in support of both scientific & administrative communication and information exchange (working with IT Managers on ICT Strategic Analysis and GoogleApps experimentation, SLC project, ESBC project);
- Improve access to and sharing of information at the system level, including the participation of partners (CGMap, CGVLibrary. AAA Framework and workshops, KS Projects, OLR, CGXchange);
- Improve access to and utilization of information global public goods within the broader agricultural research for development community (AAA Framework and workshops, CSI and Geospatial Technology Program – see below);
- Develop and provide access to tools to support collaborative work (CGXchange and KS Projects see below);
- Strengthen a collaborative, learning work culture through capacity building, tools provision, modeling and policy development (see KS projects below);
- Obtain economic savings through system-wide approaches to purchasing of relevant goods and services (3.7 million USD saved since 2003); and
- Make the CGIAR an international model in the use of information and communication technologies and collaborative, open, learning-based work (see International Leadership below).

The hard work of our team and the many communities we nurture are helping the Program meet or exceed expectations in contributing to the CGIAR as a unified system and a leading knowledge organization. Many are the areas we can be proud of, but, if I were to identify just a few that illustrate how we add value to the system, they would include:

Availability and Access - 1- The CGIAR was called the best kept secret in the world; with CGMap the secret is out. The ICT-KM program, working with internal and external groups, developed EasyMTP, an application to guide the completion of Medium Term Plans. CGIAR Centers compiled their 2009-2011 MTP in a standard format and the data is uploaded to the CGMap: a window on CGIAR research plans that facilitates cross search and analysis while increasing transparency and accountability. 2- Research-oriented organizations cannot be satisfied just knowing they have produced high quality science. It is essential that the outputs of research are communicated and put to use, in the village, on the ground, in the lab, or across the negotiating table. The CGIAR is no exception. We are developing a AAA framework (Availability, Accessibility and Applicability) to measure and improve availability and access to CGIAR research outputs. We are working to ensure the valuable research the CGIAR produces systematically gets off the shelf and to the hands of those who need it.

Consortium for Spatial Information - Agriculture is the only major sector of modern economies that remains extremely dependent upon, and vulnerable to, the location-specific endowments, risks, and impacts of nature. The livelihoods of poor farm households are, therefore, highly conditioned by geographic location in general. The CIO office was recently selected to manage a new initiative that promises to place the CGIAR's Consortium for Spatial Information in a strategic, leadership role in helping realize the promise of geospatial technology in cutting poverty and hunger. This initiative will allow the CSI to fully participate in the design and implementation of a new program on Geospatial Technology for Agricultural Development to be funded by the Gates Foundation. The CIO Office had already helped the CSI community to become an internationally recognized player in the spatial field.

Knowledge Sharing Projects These projects have been engaged across the CGIAR system and requests for involvement, assistance and partnership are expanding. They are contributing to Program goals and the system through: the KS Toolkit; Workshops on KS in Research, strategy planning, research data management, research communication and KS approaches and strategies; KS in research pilot projects; and partnering with the CGIAR Secretariat and others around the change management process, CSO engagement and AGM stakeholder engagement. The CGIAR is changing; the KS projects are supporting the change.

International Leadership –The CIO office has continued to build strong relationships with partner organizations. Efforts in 2008 have led to the development of joint workshops, training and initiatives with: FAO; GFAR; IFAD; FARA; DFID; French Ministry of Foreign Affairs; CABI; CTA; UNGIWG; and CIARD. Organisations are coming to the CGIAR for assistance and partnership in the ICT and KM areas. Such efforts have led to promising results such as the Gates Foundation's request to the CIO and the CSI to play a lead role in their African Geospatial Technology Program and IFAD and FAO's partnering with the Program on many fronts.